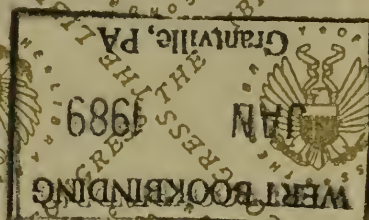


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J U D A S

JUDAS *by*
HARRY KEMP



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no.

TO
P. L. B.

*A noise of archery and wielded swords
All night rang through his dreams. When risen
morn*

*Let down her rosy feet on Galilee
Blue-vistaed, on the house-top Judas woke:*

*Desire of battle lifted in his breast
Although the day was hung with sapphire peace,
And to his inner eye battalions bright
Of seraphim, fledged with celestial mail,
Came marching up the wide-flung ways of dawn
To usher in the triumph-day of Christ . . .*

*But sun on sun departed, moon on moon,
And still the Master lingered by the way,
Iscariot deemed, dusk'd in mortality
And darkened in the God by flesh of man.*

*For Judas a material kingdom saw
And not a realm of immaterial gold,
A city of renewed Jerusalem
And not that New Jerusalem, diamond-paved
With Love and sapphire-walled with Brother-
hood,*

*Which He, the Master, wrestled to make plain
With thews of parable and simile—*

*So, 'tis the Flesh that clogs Him, Judas thought
(A simple, earnest man, he loved Him well
And slew Him with great friendship in the
end) ;*

*Yea, if He chose to say the Word of Power,
The seraphim and cherubim, invoked,
Would wheel in dazzling squadrons down the
sky*

*And for the Hosts of Israel move in war
As in those holy battles waged of yore.*

* * *

*Ah, all the World now knows Gethsemane,
But few the Love in that betraying Kiss!*

Judas

ACT I

In the courtyard of Judas' warehouse, in Jerusalem.

Two servants of Judas discovered. They are taking account of merchandise which is piled up, having been unloaded from recently arrived caravans. One of them is Aristobulus, a Greek slave, who stands with stylus and wax tablet, overseeing the re-ordering and arrangement of the goods, and taking inventory. The other is a Syrian from Antioch, also a slave of Judas.

ARISTOBULUS

Well, then—that makes an end of this consignment. It tallies to a point with the account rendered by the caravan-master. Let us now reckon up what the latest caravan

brought us over the Damascus route—first come the jars of Syrian wine. They are of greatest value and must be counted and stored away in a cool place before the sun is at a much greater height—else will they lose in savor. How many jars do you find?

SECOND SLAVE

Fifty-four.

ARISTOBULUS

What—only fifty-four? The bill of lading says fifty-five. You must have missed one. Count them over again. It may be that the rascally caravan drivers have drunk one up, and cast the jar away. They are a bad and lawless lot.

SECOND SLAVE

[Having recounted the jars.]

You were right, and mine was the mistake. I counted fifty-five, exactly, this time. The best of us make mistakes at times.

ARISTOBULUS

But you must learn not to make mistakes. They are costly in this business. Besides, though Judas is a good master, nothing arouses his wrath sooner than bad management and mistakes. But who was your master before? Or did you *ever* have another master? In this country one is liable to be a free man one day and a slave the next.

SECOND SLAVE

I was a free man before.

ARISTOBULUS

You favor the Syrians in general cast of countenance.

SECOND SLAVE

Rightly so—for I am a Syrian. I hail from Antioch.

ARISTOBULUS

From Antioch—I too hail from Antioch. That is, I lived there several years. Be-

fore that I lived in Greece on the Corinthian isthmus, when I was a mere lad and before I was sold into slavery. I was always restless and eager for adventure. I was a stout youth. One day a blind minstrel stopped for the night at our town and in the market place he recited stories from the Odyssey about the travels of Ulysses. That very next day I ran away from home and joined a trireme . . . After that I experienced many vicissitudes. Finally, being one of the defeated in war, I was caught and sold into slavery, and, to make a long story short, here I am, a slave to a Jew. But how came you to become a slave?

SECOND SLAVE

How came I to become a slave? . . . In a far different way. My father failed in business. He was an olive merchant. He was old, and I allowed myself to be sold into slavery in his stead, to clear the indebtedness he was in to a money-lender.

ARISTOBULUS

Well, no matter what they say about the Jews—and a Greek naturally hates a Jew—you are fortunate indeed in having found a Jew for a master, and this Judas in particular! The Jew works his servants hard, but at least he treats them as if they were his fellow men. He doesn't abuse them as do the Roman and Greek masters—and our present master is as reasonable and as kind a Jew as anyone could find.

SECOND SLAVE

In one breath you both laud and decry the Jews.

ARISTOBULUS

And I do so wittingly. For they are all gone mad over their religion. In all else are they a sensible people. But for their laws and their temple here at Jerusalem will they lay down their lives gladly, and at any time.

And here and there false prophets are always springing up, who ever find hundreds to believe in them and to follow them whithersoever they lead. And having secured a following, they then go forth into the waste places and deserts where no man dwells, and there they fast and pray, and baptize those who have accompanied them, seeking what they call salvation. There is no Jew—no matter how business-like and practical in every-day affairs he may be—who is not touched a little with this fanatic madness. Take as an instance our master Judas. Astute in trade and bargains though he be, Judas himself is always speaking of the Messiah. He tells me with his own mouth many times each day that the time of the advent of the Saviour of the Jews is at hand!

SECOND SLAVE

Much of what you tell me I in no wise understand—what mean they by the words Saviour and Messiah?

ARISTOBULUS

One who is to come endued with supernatural power, and deliver them out of the hands of their oppressors. Long ago the Jews were a great people. In the days of their greatest kings, Solomon and David, they were rulers over other nations, and not subjects, as now they have been for so many years. At one time their realm extended from the Euphrates to the Great Sea. Since those days it has been the one dream and ambition of the Jews to bring in anew their ancient glory. And many prophecies have grown up around this hope of theirs, so that now they fully expect, when the time is ripe, the sudden appearance of a descendant of the Royal House of David. He will come, their prophets say, a plenipotentiary of Jehovah, armed with divine power, and make the Jews not only once more their own masters, but the rulers of the rest of the world. Nay, they even go further, some claiming that with the coming of this great leader

the golden age will begin, that even the dead will rise from their burial places to live again—Death himself at last yielding to the puissance of the New Order—and all men will be friends and will live together in love and concord. That is what every Jew sees in his mind's eye when he says Saviour or Messiah.

SECOND SLAVE

Truly, comrade, that sounds in the telling like one of our Greek myths. 'Tis a pretty tale indeed. But do they really have faith in such a hope?

ARISTOBULUS

Yes. Though it sounds like an incredible tale told by travellers to while away the hours of a languid afternoon, yet with them it seems as true and undeniable as the fact that the sun rises or the stars shine.

[A noise of voices heard from the distance. They stop conversing to listen.]

SECOND SLAVE

[After a pause.]

What was that—what does that mean?

ARISTOBULUS

It means that, somewhere in the city, another tumult is begun. But that is nothing unusual. You will grow used to tumults and brawls—they are of daily occurrence in Jerusalem.

SECOND SLAVE

What do they quarrel about?

ARISTOBULUS

About their religion. The Sadducees fight the Pharisees, and the Pharisees fight the Sadducees, and the Zealots use their daggers on both parties. Then, coming up from all parts of Judea on festival days, the Pilgrims fight among each other.

[Voices heard, drawing rapidly nearer.]

SECOND SLAVE

But this sounds like the cry of a multitude in pursuit of one whom they hate. It reverberates like the roar of an awakened wild-beast.

ARISTOBULUS

[Looking down street.]

You speak true! They are indeed in pursuit of some one . . . Lo, he comes, running this way.

[Enter, in great disorder, Matthew, the tax-gatherer.]

MATTHEW

Hide me, hide me until they pass by—I have eluded them for the moment . . . If they but lay hands on me, they will tear me limb from limb!

ARISTOBULUS

We are slaves . . . We dare do naught but what our master bids us do. We cannot hide you—you must see our master.

MATTHEW

Where is your master then? In God's name
either lead me to him or straightway call
him forth!

ARISTOBULUS

I will summon him—though he will be in wrath
with me for disturbing him, for this is the
hour which he spends reading the Law.

*[Exit Aristobulus. Noise of mob
heard.]*

*[Re-enter Aristobulus. After him
comes Judas, carrying in his right hand
the scroll of the Law. Noise of mob
heard again.]*

JUDAS

Whence all this uproar and disturbance? Can-
not a servant of God meditate on the Law
and the Prophets in peace?

[To Matthew.]

What would you?

MATTHEW

I am pursued and in danger of my life. Give me a hiding place till those who pursue me have passed me by.

JUDAS

What wrong have you done to the multitude to make them hate you so? In what wise have you oppressed them, or what one of the Laws of our fathers have you broken?

MATTHEW

I was a tax-gatherer for the Romans. I am so no longer. But the People still remember me and the office I held over them, and so they seek to be revenged on me.

JUDAS

You, a Jew! And yet you have betrayed to the Gentile your own people!

MATTHEW

But cannot one repent of evil done? Behold!
I no longer gather taxes . . .

[The mob roars again exultantly, like a pack of hounds, which, having lost the scent, now takes it up again.]

Listen! They have at last discovered my stratagem—I am doomed!

JUDAS

He who has betrayed his own people well deserves death at their hands. But come, Matthew, tax-gatherer, I will save you.

[To Aristobulus.]

Aristobulus, hold them off till I come out again!

ARISTOBULUS

Yes, master.

[Exeunt hurriedly Judas and Matthew within.]

[After a moment's pause a mob of Jewish citizens storms in, armed with clubs and stones. Cries of Kill the tax-gatherer, Kill him, are heard.]

ONE OF MOB

[*To Aristobulus.*

Did you see one running this way?

ARISTOBULUS

One, running, passed this way. He is not here now. He turned down yonder street.

[*Re-enter Judas.*

JUDAS

Citizens! What means this tumult? How dare you thus break in upon my peace?

FIRST CITIZEN

We seek one Matthew, a tax-gatherer, who ran this way to escape the visitation of our just vengeance upon his head.

SECOND CITIZEN

He has made himself rich, this Matthew, from the taxes the Romans farmed out to him. He has been the most exacting of Publicans.

He has wrung the last penny from many of us. Therefore would we put him to death.

FIRST CITIZEN

Yes! 'Tis bad enough to have to pay tribute to a Gentile—but to see a Jew wring the very last drop of blood from his own kind—this is too grievous a burden to be borne.

JUDAS

I grant you so—it *is* a grievous thing. But he whom ye seek is not here.

A VOICE FROM THE CROWD

But, indeed, he ran this way! He must be here!

FIRST CITIZEN

[To him who has just spoken.]

Yes! It was you who saw him running by.

VOICE

Yes, I saw him pass by my bazaar where I sell sweet-meats—so I took out after him. He

thought he had entirely escaped by turning down a byway, but *I* saw him.

FIRST CITIZEN

Judas! It is plain that you seek to hide him from us! Is he a kinsman of yours?

JUDAS

I tell you yet again that he whom you seek is not here. Go your several ways. Why must you citizens of Jerusalem be always stirring up tumults? There is not a day passes but brings its bloodshed, not a night in which cries of affliction and woe do not rise to the stars. Nor can a single festival pass by unmarred with broils. You seem to lay hold on every opportunity to sow discord, careless of the harvests of death which you must afterward surely reap. Yet is Rome lenient with us Jews. We have our own laws; our religious rites are never interfered with. Our temple alone, of all the temples of the world, stands unpolluted with the images of Cæsar.

A ZEALOT

All *that* is true—and *still* Cæsar is our King—
and we would have no King but God! None
shall reign over God's Chosen but God him-
self!

JUDAS

Brethren—I, too, would have no King but God.
Else were I no true child of Israel. But we
must bide God's time. Let us possess our-
selves with patience . . . When His King-
dom comes it will not come like this . . .
He will send One!

VOICE FROM THE CROWD

[*Breaking in.*

Ah! He speaks now of the Messiah!

ANOTHER VOICE

Yes—he discourses like the Pharisees. He
continually cries Wait, Wait—but we can
wait no longer. We tire of delays, of de-
liverance which never comes.

FIRST CITIZEN

And whilst we tarry the Romans keep draining our coffers of gold—keep levying taxes on us as a subject people—on us, the children of Israel, over whom God has watched with a zealous eye through all the ages! He who brought us up out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm!

SECOND CITIZEN

[*To Judas.*

You say that the Romans are easy with us, that they do not interfere with our religious rites? But have they not of late diverted the temple-money aside from its holy and ordained uses?—have they not used the tithe money to build an aqueduct with, from Cæsarea to Jerusalem?

VOICE OF ZEALOT

Aye, must we ever stand still without returning a blow? Must we ever submit to such sac-

rileges?—No, say I—the time to strike is at hand!

FIRST CITIZEN

And with whom can we so well begin as with those of our own flesh and blood who sell themselves to the Romans and join in oppressing us?

SECOND CITIZEN

Therefore must we come at this Matthew, and rend him limb from limb—we must make an example of such as he.

VOICE FROM THE CROWD

Once I was compelled to sell my very cloak that I might get money wherewith to pay a tax he demanded. I am a poor man—it is contrary to the law of Moses to force a poor man to sell his only cloak.

SECOND CITIZEN

Let us go on and seek him further.

FIRST CITIZEN

Nay, I am persuaded that this man has concealed him within.

[To Judas.]

Stand aside and let us enter and lay hold on him!

[First and second citizens draw swords and press toward Judas, closely accompanied by crowd.]

[Judas lifts his hand, barring the way.]

JUDAS

Nay, you shall not go within. Remember who I am, that I am Judas, the richest and most influential merchant in Jerusalem. Do you think that I will stand by and let you storm through my house, destroying and overturning everything in a vain search for one who has probably already made his escape from you?

FIRST CITIZEN

Let me and my friend [*pointing to second citizen*] go in and search for him. We will injure nothing.

VOICES

[*From various parts of the crowd.*]

Yes! Yes! Let them go in then!

JUDAS

Nay! I will not. Who gave any of you the right to search my house? Ye know the Law!

VOICE FROM CROWD

The Roman Law is no law for us.

JUDAS

The Roman spear and sword will be, then.

[*To mob.*]

Go your ways now, before Pilate's soldiery come and some of you lose your lives!

FIRST CITIZEN

[*To mob.*

You see now! Though he denies that this Matthew lurks within, yet, by his actions, and by these veiled threats hidden beneath his words, he gives his denial the lie! Come on!

[*To Judas.*

Step aside, Judas. We would not harm you, but the tax-gatherer we must have, and if you will not deliver him, like a true child of Israel, into our hands for a just vengeance, then will we take him.

MOB

[*Pressing forward.*

Death to the tax-gatherer!

JUDAS

[*Threatening.*

Back, I say—back!

[*A happy thought striking him, he uplifts the copy of the Torah which he has laid on a counting table.*

You speak of the *One* Law—not the Roman Law, but the Law you revere, the Law of our Fathers—behold then! This Law you have broken—God's Law which ye affect to revere and to keep.

[Showing them the Torah.]

For when ye brake in upon my peace and quiet I was reading in these very scriptures.—And to disturb one when one is reading in the book of Moses is punishable by death, and it is also an insult to the most High God of our Fathers!

[This has the desired effect—the mob gives back in consternation.]

FIRST CITIZEN

God save us!—We knew not what we did!

JUDAS

If I so desired, ye might be punished by the Sanhedrin for this! Some of you I know—

[Pointing.]

You!—and you!—and you!

FIRST CITIZEN

Judas! Forgive us our trespass and we will withdraw. Unwittingly have we broken the Law.—Report us not to the Sanhedrin!

[At this juncture a sound of military marching is heard.]

JUDAS

Never mind! I will not make complaint—but there! Hear you not that trampling of feet and clatter of arms? It is just as I warned you. The Roman guard comes, to investigate the tumult. It is too late now to disperse—you must now stand and give an account of yourselves to the Romans.

[The mob tries to steal out, but is compelled to surge back again—they all gather on right, and from back enter centurion, with a company of soldiers; they stand on left toward back. Judas, left front. A momentary tableau.]

CENTURION

[*Haughtily.*

What means all this? Will you Jews never be at peace except under continual threat of the uplifted sword? I tell you, that, since the bloody tumult ye engaged in at your last Passover, the patience of the Emperor has become well-nigh exhausted. His tolerance will not endure forever. Will we Romans at last have to break down your walls, overthrow your temples, and sow the remains of your holy city with salt?

[*Murmurs of wrath among the populace.*

A VOICE

He insults us to our very faces.

ANOTHER VOICE

He deserves stoning. In so speaking of our holy city he blasphemes God.

FIRST CITIZEN

Be silent, brethren—they are armed!

CENTURION

[To Judas.]

What are these people about?

JUDAS

They were in hue and cry after a Jewish tax-gatherer, who ran this way, they say!

CENTURION

[Turning again to the people.]

Listen, Jews! Is it not the Law that taxes be gathered? Then why pursue this tax-gatherer? He does according to Law! The Emperor lets you live your own lives, lets you serve your own God according to the ways of your Fathers—all he exacts from you is this tribute! 'Tis but a little thing. Cæsar is not a harsh master. Remember—in other days the little finger of the Assyrian was heavier upon you than is now the whole

arm of the Roman. Will ye never gain wisdom? Will ye always continue to bring down upon yourselves the wrath of those to whom ye are subjects?—But this one thing Rome requires, none other—Ye must not break the Roman Law!

A ZEALOT

[Pushing out from the crowd; in a loud voice.]

Nay—First, and foremost, and above all,—we must not break the Jewish law, the Law of Laws—the sacred Will of God, handed down to us in our holy books, from of old, by our Fathers!

[Several citizens lay hold of him and attempt to hush him.]

ONE

Be silent!

SECOND ONE

Govern your frenzy! Will you bring down death upon all of us!

VOICE FROM THE BACKGROUND

Nay! Let him speak. The Spirit of God is evidently upon him, giving him this headlong boldness.

ZEALOT

[Breaking away from those who would constrain him.]

What, then, is this Roman Law of which you prate so insolently? It is naught but a code devised by the minds of men!—that and none other. Us it cannot bind because we have a Law of our own, one that is holy and right, and entirely of God. *It* is not a corrupt and shameful thing used as an instrument of oppression!

[To centurion, who threatens.]

Nay! Kill me if you will!

[The mob, taking courage from the frenzy of the Zealot, begin to press in threateningly on the soldiers, crying, He tells the truth, He is inspired of God, Down with the Romans!]

JUDAS

[Boldly stepping between the Romans and the Jews.]

[To the people.]

Go your ways now, while there is yet time, ere there ensue shedding of blood and loss of life!

[To centurion.]

Slay him not, sir—He knows not what he says—he has a devil and is beside himself!

ZEALOT

[To Judas, in a frenzy.]

Woe unto you, Judas, of Kerioth! It is you that have a devil, not I—woe unto you, you betrayer of the Son of God!

[He falls down in a trance.]

A CITIZEN

Betrayer of the Son of God? Can God have a son? The fellow is indeed mad.

ONE CITIZEN, *to Another*

What did he mean when he spoke so of Judas?

ANSWERING VOICE

I know not.—Perhaps he hath a devil, as Judas said.

A SOLDIER

[*Sneeringly.*

All the Jews are mad and possessed with devils, methinks!

[*A murmur of resentment from the mob. A stone thrown at the soldier who has just spoken hits the wall behind.*

CENTURION

[*Flaring up.*

So!—you treacherous dogs! Will ye never learn better than this! Taste then of the sharpness of the Roman sword! Soldiers, hence with these circumcised slaves!

[*Exeunt Jews, soldiers following close, with drawn swords. A scattered fusil-*

*lade of stones strikes their shields.
Then sounds of cries and blows off the
stage. Various voices calling, Ah, the
Barbarian has killed me! Ah me! Ah,
woe is Jerusalem! Then naught but a
few groans heard, tumult dying out.*

JUDAS

[Waits a moment, till all is quiet.

O Israel! Israel! How have you fallen from
your high estate!

[Calling within.

You may venture forth again! All is safe!

Your pursuers have gone!

[Re-enter Matthew.

MATTHEW

Praise be to the God of Israel!

JUDAS

Aye, to Him render thanks! You were hard
pressed!

MATTHEW

I was indeed! Yet did I not seek escape for mine own sake—but I wished to live for the sake of those that pursued me.

[Enter, at back, Simon the Zealot; he stands for a time unobserved, listening to their conversation.]

JUDAS

You wished to live for *their* sakes! You mean that—

MATTHEW

It will take many words to explain.

JUDAS

That is very strange; you speak in paradoxes. I do not understand.

MATTHEW

Listen! I have a marvel to relate. The Messiah has come. I have seen him whom gen-

erations have longed to see and have died without seeing. He has chosen me as one of his disciples.

JUDAS

The Messiah! And you, a tax-gatherer, his chosen one! Incredible!

SIMON

[Coming forward.]

Aye! The day of the Lord is truly at hand.
I too have seen and heard.

JUDAS

Simon! Returned safe from Gilead!
[They embrace.]

SIMON

Aye, Judas, my brother—returned from Gilead. Safe and sound—with many cruses of balm. But I bring news with me that will

be more healing than all the balm of Gilead to your soul! As I crossed the Jordan, on my way back, with the caravan, I came upon a great multitude following after one clothed in raiment of camel's hair, who preached to them continually, exhorting them to baptism. However, thinking it to be naught but another false prophet who was leading the people astray like foolish sheep, I had gone on without stopping, had not the voice of the man given me stay. It had a note in it like the sound of the mysterious wind when it walks at night among the cedar trees. I alighted from my camel and listened closely to hear whereof he spoke. Soon learned I that the speaker was one who called himself John the Baptist. And indeed, his words seemed not of man, but of God, like the words our holy prophets spake of old, so soul-compelling were they. It seemed as if Elijah were risen from the dead to call Israel to repentance again. In fact there were some there who maintained that he was Elijah come again. Repent ye,

Repent ye, he cried unto the multitude, some of whom wept at his words. Repent ye—for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. And after he had baptised many and the multitude had somewhat dispersed, I too came forward, questioning of him, Art thou, then, the Messiah who is to come?

I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness of whom Isaiah spake, he replied, and I indeed baptise with water of repentance—but, continued he, there comes one after me whose sandals I am not worthy to unloose. He indeed shall baptize with the true baptism—with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. His fan is in his hand and he will thoroughly purge his floor and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

JUDAS

Ah! I understand that dark saying—Israel is the wheat, and the Romans are the chaff—but proceed, Simon!

SIMON

Night came on! The caravan had gone ahead, leaving me alone with my camel. I pitched my tent. In the morning I purposed questioning the prophet further—to ask of him when the Messiah of whom he prophesied, and for whom all Israel waited, would come, if perchance he were not already amongst us; and, if so, where I could find him, that I might join with him ere his work began. But at daybreak I woke to find that the Prophet had mysteriously departed in the night, and with him his disciples, leaving the multitude behind. So now I know little more than at first.

JUDAS

Nevertheless, the Day of the Lord *is* at hand. My soul feels its coming. All Israel faints for deliverance as a traveller, lost in the desert, faints for water. This present state of things cannot long continue, if God still loves his people.

MATTHEW

Friends, the day of the Lord is even now at hand. Like the first putting forth of the almond tree in Spring—The fields will soon be clothed with green, and after that will come the golden ripeness of the harvest.

[To Simon.]

You need no longer seek the prophet John. For he of whom John and all the Prophets prophesy is even now among us.

JUDAS

[Incredulously.]

Have you seen him and spoken with him?

MATTHEW

Yes, that have I!

JUDAS

Where?

MATTHEW

In no other place than in Capernaum of Galilee.

JUDAS

In Galilee!

MATTHEW

I was sitting there at the receipt of the customs when he passed by and called me unto him.

SIMON

Are you that notorious Matthew, the tax-gatherer?

MATTHEW

I am that Matthew you speak of, but no longer do I gather taxes.

SIMON

[Drawing dagger.]

Then Matthew, betrayer of your own people to the Romans, prepare to die!

JUDAS

[Coming up and seizing Simon's wrist.]
Hold, Simon! Will you never cease playing the intemperate and hasty zealot? Hear the

man through! Did he not say that he no longer served the Romans?

MATTHEW

[Quietly.]

Yes, but hear me through in patience!—then, after I have spoken, slay me if you will. Verily, I am that Matthew, the Jew who gathered taxes for the Romans. But I no longer sit at the receipt of the customs.

SIMON

But you have just told us that you recently sat receiving taxes in Galilee! And you will fill the office no more—until the time of the next gathering, belike!

MATTHEW

I have met the Messiah—I have put off all my old habits of life.

JUDAS

The Messiah! You hear him, Simon, the Messiah!

MATTHEW

The very Messiah, none other.

SIMON

How did you know him to be the Messiah?

JUDAS

Yes, what signs did he show?—for there be false as well as true prophets.

MATTHEW

Never spake man as this man spake. Never looked man as this man looked. I was sitting at the receipt of the customs at Capernaum when he passed by. His shadow fell across the counter and darkened the reckonings I was making. It was late eventide—I was in an ill humor. The receipts for the day had been unusually poor. The Galileans had been lax in payment. I was on the point of rebuking him who stood in my light, but, as I looked up, I looked full in the face of the Wonderful Master. He

smiled at me in kindly wise. He spake but two words, "Follow me." I rose like one under a spell. I cast over the table from before me. The denarii scattered about the street. Something seemed to break within me, and the bands which had bound my soul in littleness and covetousness were loosened. A newer and grander life put forth to flower within me. I obeyed the Master and followed him.

SIMON

By what tokens and signs did he prove himself the Messiah?

MATTHEW

It needed no signs, no tokens. I had only to see him, and, above all, to hear him speak, to know for a certainty that he was the Messiah. When *you* see him, and hear him speak, *you too* will believe in him and accept him. Only those who harden their hearts against him can resist his words and the light in his face.

JUDAS

But how comes it that you are not now with him—this wonderful leader of men? What make you here, at this time of times, in Jerusalem? If *I* had found the Messiah, as *you* say you have, I would never have left his presence, until, victorious, he had swept the Romans into the Mediterranean,—until he had conquered all the oppressors of the Jews, and sat triumphant on the throne of David,—till God's kingdom was brought in!

MATTHEW

Let me explain. He assured me that the day of his triumph was not yet, though close at hand. And I came to Jerusalem at his own bidding. He commanded me, saying, "Go, sell all you have, and follow me."—These were his very words. I have now disposed of all that was mine in worldly possessions. And, behold, this very day I return to him.

JUDAS

You must show us the way to him. You must take us with you—for we also desire to join with the Saviour of Israel. It has been my dream night and day, to see the Kingdom of God brought into being.

SIMON

We will make him stronger by two.

MATTHEW

Come then!

[Starts to go.]

JUDAS

But a moment! I must leave my business affairs in some one's hands before I go.

[Calling servant.]

Aristobulus! Aristobulus!

ARISTOBULUS

[Enters.]

Master! What will you?

JUDAS

Boy! I go on a long journey. For all your youth you are cunning at bargains and a servant to be relied on and trusted in. Time and again have I entrusted you with my affairs while I went forth from Jerusalem even as far as Alexandria, on pressing matters of business. But this time, God knows when I shall return!

ARISTOBULUS

Master, I have yet to betray any trust you repose in me.

JUDAS

I leave you in charge of all my affairs till I return. See that the wines are well cared for. Take special heed of Cephas, the chief buyer of my wines. He will cheat if he can. Be astute in bargaining with the caravan masters. Pay as little as you can for goods, and sell for as much as you can. Be not remiss in the smallest item I have

charged you with. And if you discharge all duties well, on my return I will reward you with the gift of your own freedom.

ARISTOBULUS

I will be as your second self in my duty toward you.

[*Exit.*

JUDAS

And now, brethren, let us forth to Galilee to join the Messiah!

MATTHEW

Nay, Judas! Before you remove from Jerusalem to become one of the Master's disciples, you must do as I have done, "You must sell all you have and follow me,"—so commanded the Master of *me*!

JUDAS

Nay—*that* is what he required of *you* because *your* money was ill-gotten, was gotten by

extorting unjust taxes from your own countrymen, for the Romans. On the other hand, my money has all been gained by honest trading. Besides, I must see him first and when he commands me with his own lips to do as he commanded you—then will I obey him to the uttermost.

MATTHEW

Very well, then—we shall see the Master first.

Yet am I certain that he will require the same of you that he required of me.

SIMON

And as for *my* possessions, they are of small account, just enough to keep my wife and son from starving during my absence. And surely in that case he would not wish me to dispose of my worldly goods?

JUDAS

The Messiah might be able to put my gold to good use. Yea! Even the Messiah! For

must he not partly by human aid build up this Kingdom to be?

[A Roman procession passes by back-entrance, with clank and clatter of arms.]

MATTHEW

Ah! Rome! Rome! Your days in Judea are numbered! Soon will you cease to draw tight the reins of the world. For the day of the Lord is at hand. The Messiah soon will storm through these very streets, sweeping your hosts before him in triumph, the Sword of the Wrath of God in his hand, his feet treading out the red vintages of the consuming wrath of Jehovah!

SIMON

[Uplifting his dagger.]

No King but God! No King but God!

MATTHEW

On to Galilee, brethren!

[Sound of tumult afar off.]

JUDAS

By the Beard of Aaron! This is the city of
tumults and not the City of Peace!

MATTHEW

The time of the Feast of Unleavened Bread
draws nigh. The people are ever restless
at times of Festival.

[They start to go.]

SIMON

[Turning suddenly to Judas.]
Stay! We have forgotten Lebbæus.

JUDAS

Of mornings he is busy at the temple.

SIMON

We must have him accompany us.

JUDAS

Yes. We must not leave Lebbæus behind,
that true servant of the Lord. He too will

be glad of the good tidings. Many and many a day he and I have discussed, and interpreted together, the prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah.

SIMON

And yet I despair of our ever persuading him to go with us. He is a Levite. And the Levites and Pharisees seem content to preserve things as they are—as long as the Romans leave them free to offer up, unmolested, the sacrifices that Moses commanded,—as long as they do not bring their graven images and the bust of the emperor into the holy city.

MATTHEW

Indeed, for that matter, the Romans *do* greatly favor the Jews—for I have often been told by a far-travelled centurion whose acquaintance I made in Galilee, at Capernaum, that the temple at Jerusalem is the only one among those of all the peoples of the earth

wherein the statue of the emperor has not been set up, wherein the emperor has not enjoyed divine honors.

JUDAS

Come, let us to the Temple and tell Lebbæus of the good tidings—for I know him better than you do, Simon, and I am sure that we can persuade him to go with us to Galilee.

SIMON

[Gazing down the street.]

We need not remove one foot toward the Temple—Lebbæus himself saves us that journey. Lo! Where he comes!

JUDAS

But that can hardly be Lebbæus! He rends his garments and dust is strewn over his head.

[Peering.]

Yet it *is* he. Mayhap one of his near kinsmen has died.

[Enter Lebbæus.]

LEBBÆUS

Woe unto Jerusalem, that Holy City of God!
And woe, woe to the Children of Israel—
for sorrow was never like unto theirs since
the beginning of the world!

SIMON

How now, Lebbæus?

LEBBÆUS

[*Choking.*

The Romans!

JUDAS

Aye! The Romans! What of them?

LEBBÆUS

The Abomination of Desolation of which the
Prophet Daniel spake—the time is at hand,
and now is . . . Even I, a Levite, can no
longer endure in patience.

JUDAS

Well said, Lebbæus! But tell us what this is that is of such woeful import?

LEBBÆUS

The Romans!—Last night, toward the last watch, under cover of darkness, they marched into the Holy City, bearing along with them their golden eagles. And now in the outer courts of the Temple stand the graven images which the Law has forbidden. The Temple is polluted.

[They all rend their garments.]

ALL

Woe, woe to Israel!

LEBBÆUS

[Continuing.]

At the first glimpse of dawn there they stood revealed, the golden eagles of Rome, poisoning with outstretched wings, as if they would next fly into the very Holy of Holies.

I had determined long ago to be patient in the Lord and to endure to the uttermost. But now the Romans have offered insult to God himself. The entire city is in commotion, for the story of the sacrilege has spread among the people as a forest fire sweeps up the slopes of Lebanon. Already men are running in out of the country, intent on compelling the Romans to remove their standards out of the Holy Place. Ah, if God would but now send unto us His Anointed One, whom He has promised us! Ah, if only the Messiah would come now and lead the multitude to punish these insulters of our holy laws and customs!

SIMON

Lebbæus, you have spoken after the manner of the prophets. Behold, the Messiah of whom you speak has come! Had you not so unexpectedly run to us, we had sought you out to tell you the good news!

LEBBÆUS

The Messiah already among us! But where?
Is he here in Jerusalem? And, if so, by
what signs and portents are we to know
him to be of God?

MATTHEW

Nay, my life if I bear false witness! I saw
him with my own eyes, in Galilee.

JUDAS

Yes, he has seen him and spoken with him.

SIMON

And indeed I, for my part, saw his forerunner,
the re-arisen Elias, at the Upper Ford over
Jordan.

LEBBÆUS

Then, belike, he is already marching to Jerusa-
lem, leading the multitude to victory over
the Romans. We had better stay here and

wait his arrival. Else might we pass him by. And the coming of the Messiah is an event which I have waited for, in fasting and prayer, lo, these many years!

MATTHEW

He told me to return to Capernaum and rejoin him there.

[Noise of tumult heard without.]

LEBBÆUS

Hearken to the voice of the multitude. Like the waves of the Great Western Sea beating in storm about a promontory, so they dash hither and thither, without a leader, driven on by the wind of their own despair and wrath!

MATTHEW

But come, brethren, we delay too long. Why waste words when the Chosen One of God waits us in Galilee? *They—*

[Pointing without.]

will soon have the leader they lack.

LEBBÆUS

[To Matthew.

Lead and we will gladly follow.

*[Exeunt.**[Enter the mob of citizens.*

FIRST CITIZEN

What shall we do? Whither shall we go?

SECOND CITIZEN

To Cæsarea, whither all the chief men of Jerusalem have repaired, to beg of Pilate that he remove his heathen images from the Holy City!

FIRST CITIZEN

I for my part am tired of continual supplication. It does no good.

A VOICE

Yes! Let us fall on the Legionaries stationed here at Jerusalem, and put them all to death. They be few, we, many.

SECOND CITIZEN

But they are every one of them soldiers skilled in warfare. And though here they be few in numbers, yet Rome has enough of them to overwhelm the habitable world. Do nothing rash! Let us hasten to Cæsarea and join the elders in their supplications toward Pilate!

VOICES

He advises well! On to Cæsarea! On to Cæsarea!

[They go out as they cry these things.]

CURTAIN

ACT II

In the yard of an inn at Capernaum. On the left stands the entrance to the inn. In the extreme background lies the beach, and, beyond, the Sea of Galilee. A fisher-boat is seen, drawn up on shore.

Three fishermen discovered mending nets at rise of curtain.

FIRST FISHERMAN

That was a great catch!

SECOND FISHERMAN

From that one cast we filled our boat full of leaping heaps of fish!

THIRD FISHERMAN

Yes! It is well that we at last took the Wonder-worker's words in earnest and threw over the net where he bade us—else had we

gone through the day's work with empty boats.

[*To first fisherman.*]

If we had listened to you, we would never have had this luck. Why did you mock at his advice?

FIRST FISHERMAN

I thought he was only making fun of us, when he came up and advised us to throw our nets over on the shallow side. It was contrary to all my experience as a fisherman!

SECOND FISHERMAN

I myself did not have faith in what he said. But I held my peace and advised following his advice, just for luck. You know we had made two casts on the deeper side toward the open water and had gotten nothing . . . And I was indeed astonished when we attempted to haul in the nets and found them so heavy with fish that we had to call on the

other boats not far off to lend us a hand. And then, even with all our care, the nets tore!

FIRST FISHERMAN

Did you notice how jealous of our good luck old Zebedee was? He let down in the same place after us, but drew up naught but gravel, shells, and a few creeping things.

SECOND FISHERMAN

It serves Zebedee right! He is too greedy and miserly, and envious of others.

THIRD FISHERMAN

I saw the old man alone in his boat this afternoon—something unusual. Have his two sons, James and John, gone down to the Festival at Jerusalem, think you?

FIRST FISHERMAN

I wouldn't be surprised if they had—Zebedee can well afford to let them go, if he chooses

—he runs three fishing boats, altogether. But we *poor* fishermen cannot afford to go to festivals. We have to stay at home and work if we want to live.

[*Enter, a citizen of Capernaum.*

CITIZEN

God bless us all, have you heard the latest news?

FIRST FISHERMAN

What is that?

CITIZEN

Have you heard what is told about James and John, the sons of Zebedee? How they have gone off with the Wonder-worker as his disciples? It is also rumored that, because of what they have done, their father has disinherited them!

THIRD FISHERMAN

Zebedee is a rich man. . . James and John were fools. If I were his son, I'd stay at

home with him, Wonder-worker or no Wonder-worker!

CITIZEN

Yet this man is of great power, though the Pharisees say his strength is of the Evil One.

THIRD FISHERMAN

Drat the Pharisees! . . . No matter whence his power, he has this day provided us with a marvellous catch of fish.

CITIZEN

Yes, I heard about that—it is the common talk of the village. But how much truth is there in it? Common report exaggerates. . . . The net broke, for instance!

FIRST FISHERMAN

It is all true.

THIRD FISHERMAN

It is so true that if I were he I would give all my time to fishing and speedily become rich.

He gains nothing running about the country telling the people of their sins. . . .

[*Pause.*

I wonder where he learned so much about our occupation. It is evident that he knows more about fishing than any fisher on the lake.

CITIZEN

And yet he hails from Nazareth, and is naught but a carpenter's son, people say. Jesus of Nazareth, men call him. And before he learned the art of wonder-working and performing miracles he followed his father's trade at Nazareth, and now he goes about healing the sick and preaching wonderful things, not to be believed. . . . Many say that he is the Messiah.

SECOND FISHERMAN

Well, I, for one, believe in him. He knows how to catch fish. And he *must* know whereof he speaks, as well.

CITIZEN

But why does he not go among the learned for his disciples? He seems to choose none but fishermen to be his followers!

THIRD FISHERMAN

[Offended with the rest.

By the altar at Jerusalem, in that he shows wisdom!

[The other fishermen nod assent.

We fishermen have good sense, if I do say it myself. And we are not afraid of danger, for we live perilous lives.

CITIZEN

[Seeking to mollify the fishermen.

I mean no offence.

THIRD FISHERMAN

[Surlily.

Who else among the lake-people have joined with him?

CITIZEN

Two other brothers—Peter and Andrew.

FIRST FISHERMAN

[Dropping end of the net in astonishment.]

Peter and Andrew! . . . Andrew is not so bad; but Peter! I never knew so quarrelsome and violent a fellow. He does nothing but make trouble. I wonder why the man from Nazareth chose him?

SECOND FISHERMAN

I'll tell you why—when Peter's your friend he *is* your friend. The Wonder-worker picked a good man, that's what I say!

CITIZEN

Well, probably the man who can work miracles and all that knows pretty well what he's about when he chooses such men for his disciples.

[The fishers rise angrily, and the citizen hastens away. They re-seat themselves, and continue mending net. A pause.]

FIRST FISHERMAN

We're just as good as anybody else, even if we are only fishermen. What say you, Zachary?

SECOND FISHERMAN

Indeed we are—and better.

[Another pause.]

THIRD FISHERMAN

[With a sigh of relief.]

Come! The net is mended now . . . just as good as ever. That was a bad tear and a good tear. I'd be willing to have a thousand rents the same way, if each time I might draw in just such a boatload of fish.

[They rise.]

FIRST FISHERMAN

Come, comrades! all together, now . . . into the boat with it.

[They cast the net into the boat and prepare to re-embark.]

Ere sunset we'll try our luck again.

SECOND FISHERMAN

God send us good luck!

[Fishers pull off in the boat.]

[Enter two pilgrims. They rap at the door of the inn. The innkeeper comes out.]

INNKEEPER

You seek lodgings, masters? No more room have I. My inn is already pressed full with those who have come to see the New Prophet.

[Under his breath.]

And a vile crowd they are, too—every one has something the matter with him.

FIRST PILGRIM

We, also, have come to see him and to hear his wonderful words.

SECOND PILGRIM

Where is he? Abides he within?

INNKEEPER

He sailed across the Sea of Galilee, in a fisher-boat, this morning, to avoid the multitudes that flock to him from all parts of Judea. I take it that you two forerun a party of pilgrims. How many more come after you?

FIRST PILGRIM

We forerun two-score from beyond Jordan. We ourselves were followers of the Prophet John. But now we would follow this man.

SECOND PILGRIM

For John sent some of his disciples to him to find out if he were the Messiah that was to come, and he convinced them that he was.

FIRST PILGRIM

Can't you find room somewhere for those who come behind us? It is good weather—we might sleep in your courtyard.

INNKEEPER

No! I haven't room in the courtyard, even. You will have to sleep wherever you can—on the sands of the beach, perhaps—I have neither lodging nor food for one more.

[Exit innkeeper. Enter the other pilgrims in a body, hobbling, crawling, being carried, etc.]

ONE OF THEM

[To first pilgrim.]

Is the Wonder-worker nigh, Bar-Jonah?

FIRST PILGRIM

The innkeeper says that he crossed the Galilean Lake early this morning.

THE SAME VOICE

And can we find a place to stay, here at the Inn?

FIRST PILGRIM

No—the place is already over-run.

A SICK MAN

[Tremulously.]

I can go no further; I shall die. Bring me to the Master immediately. I know he can heal me. Men say he heals at a touch.

A VOICE

Be of good cheer, brother; he is not far from here—we will soon find him.

THE SICK MAN

Bring me to him immediately. I am rich, and will reward him.

FIRST PILGRIM

He seeks no reward for his healing, men say;
but come, brethren, since there is no room
for us here at the inn, let us follow after
him, across the Galilean Lake. Let us hire
fishers to row us across.

A VOICE

Well said, Bar-Jonah! To the boats, fellow-
pilgrims, to the boats!

ANOTHER SICK MAN

[Falling.]

Carry me to one of them—I can no longer
walk. My sickness overcomes me, and I
faint.

[They all go out, some carried on litters, some hobbling along, a few blind and being led.]

[Enter Mary of Magdala and two companion courtesans.]

MARY

Where is this Jesus of Nazareth, where is this high and holy prophet of God? I will bring him low, as Samson was brought low by Delilah.

FIRST COURTESAN

Believe me, mistress, if any can bring him low, it is you.

MARY

Ah, I am beautiful, am I not? . . . And yet he rebuked me when I threw myself in his way . . . and he naught but a vagabond prophet, while I am sought after by Roman captains and rulers. And *he* rejected me—

[*Choking.*

I love him.

[*A pause.*

I could kill him! He scorned me!

FIRST COURTESAN

Nay, mistress, he *scorned* you not. I must say it, mistress . . . mock not at me when I

say that he seemed too noble and gentle for that.

MARY

Nay, worse, he pitied me! And yet, he is fair and straight and tall and beautiful . . . I love him! . . . I hate him!

FIRST COURTESAN

And now you have stripped off all your jewels and raiment of silk and go in sackcloth.

SECOND COURTESAN

Yea! Do you think this is a likely way to ensnare a man?

MARY

I deal with one who is more than a man, or less than a man, I know not which—and so I take more than ordinary means to win him. Behold—

[Laughing.]

I go to him, as one repentant of her sins, in sackcloth and ashes. Do I not look sober

and contrite—and demure enough to entrap the heart of a saint?

[Mincing and making a little mouth.]

I shall become his disciple . . . I shall smooth his path of cares. I shall look after his every little want as only a woman can. And then, if he grow not to love me, I will betray him to those whose fingers itch for his life—the Pharisees!

SECOND COURTESAN

Soft, mistress! Yonder come two men.

MARY

They are disciples of his. . . . They were with him when he rebuked me.

[Enter Philip and Bartholomew.]

PHILIP

In all my days I never saw such a thing. He *cannot* avoid the multitudes which follow him. Wherever he goes, they find him out;

they people the waste places, and even the mountain-tops, and give him no rest.

[Seeing Mary and companion courtesans.]

What make you here, mistress?

MARY

I would see Jesus, the Healer and Prophet of Nazareth.

BARTHOLOMEW

He is not for such as you! Are you not that Mary of Magdala, whom he rebuked for wantonness not long ago?

MARY

Since then I have repented. And now I come to be cleansed of my sins.

BARTHOLOMEW

But I tell you that the Master has naught to do with harlots—he is a holy man of God.

PHILIP

Did he not repulse you in a public place?
What more?

MARY

Nay, but then I came before him attended by
lute-players and dancing-girls, glorying in
my wantonness. It was the wantonness in
me, and not me, that he rebuked. And now
I come to him in sackcloth, repentant.

*[Philip and Bartholomew walk to one
side.]*

PHILIP

[To Bartholomew.]

The woman is shrewd!

BARTHOLOMEW

I fear her shrewdness. I fear all such women.

[Calling across to Mary.]

Get you back to Magdala where you belong!
You are more dangerous to men in sackcloth
than in silk. But think not to win power over

the Master with your tales of repentance and your beautiful face unveiled. He is nearer a god than a man. He will laugh at you. Your cunning is of no avail. Besides, the Master is not here, but on the other side of the Lake!

MARY

You are men harsh of heart and unpitying—I will go to him and seek him out. Come, sisters!

[Exeunt Mary and companions.]

PHILIP

Perhaps this is a dark design of the Pharisees—as Delilah did with Samson—— But lo! yonder comes Matthew returning from Jerusalem.

BARTHOLOMEW

He has made quick dispatch of his affairs and an expeditious journey.

PHILIP

He comes, bringing with him three others,
just as the Master foretold when he bade the
innkeeper hold room for twelve instead of
nine.

BARTHOLOMEW

But they look woebegone, and their cloaks are
rent. What great calamity has befallen at
Jerusalem?

PHILIP

Yet, look closer—at their countenances, not
their apparel. See you not that their faces
shine as with a sudden and great joy?

*[Enter Matthew, Judas, Simon the
Zealot, and Lebbaeus.]*

BARTHOLOMEW

You have made great haste, Matthew. Have
you in so short a time done all that the Mas-
ter bade?

MATTHEW

Every jot and tittle of his will have I fulfilled.

I now possess naught but my love unto him
and my zeal for the coming Kingdom of
God.

PHILIP

And now you are rich indeed!

BARTHOLOMEW

Whom have you with you?

MATTHEW

Those whom the Master bade me lead to him.

JUDAS

I am Judas, the merchant—and these be my
friends—Simon, a caravan master, who be-
longs to the sect of the Zealots, and Leb-
bæus, a Levite, who officiates at the Holy
Temple itself.

*[They greet each other in Eastern
fashion.]*

PHILIP

And you come to join the Messiah, brethren?

SIMON

For that, indeed, and for no other reason, have we come.

BARTHOLOMEW

Behold in us, then, men who are already accepted disciples of him who is to lead Israel to victory.

PHILIP

But, at this time of great joy over the nearing deliverance of Israel from the hands of idolaters, wherefore come ye to us wearing rent cloaks and in mourning?

LEBBÆUS

Have ye not heard, then! How that the Romans have defiled the Holy City with their ensigns and golden images?

BARTHOLOMEW

We have heard; but we thought it not seemly to mourn. It is the Romans' last triumph. We who are the followers of the Messiah who comes to avenge the wrongs of Israel—we, least of all, should mourn over present calamities!

SIMON

Where is this wonderful man?

MATTHEW

He is on the other side of the Lake, whither he has withdrawn to pray and to escape the multitudes.

JUDAS

Escape the multitudes! Has he then incurred the hatred and enmity of those of whom he is to be the leader? That were a sorry state of affairs!

LEBBÆUS

Indeed, that it were!

SIMON

In that case we had better return to Jerusalem and wait yet longer for the coming of the Son of Man. For the true Messiah is to lead the people, not flee from them.

PHILIP

Be not hasty in your misunderstanding. The people follow after him because he cures them of their sickness. They pursue him from place to place, crying out to be healed, until even *he* becomes wearied. For if they had their way he would have no rest by day or by night.

MATTHEW

But has he gone away alone? He must take more precautions! The Pharisees! . . .

BARTHOLOMEW

No, he is not alone. Peter, James, and John are with him. He loves them best of all,

because they were the first to give up all for the sake of the Kingdom.

LEBBÆUS

And why have ye tarried behind?

SIMON

Think you that four are enough to withstand those who might have evil designs?

PHILIP

They would not dare touch a hair of his head because of the people, and, besides, he bade us remain to receive you on your arrival from Jerusalem; the innkeeper has reserved room for four at his request.

MATTHEW

But how knew he that I was to bring three back with me? I myself did not know. And it is by merest chance that we came together.

PHILIP

I know not how he knew, other than that he knows and foresees all things. He sometimes frightens us all with the power God has given him.

JUDAS

Indeed he *must* be the Messiah, and I have made no mistake leaving Jerusalem. He heals the sick. He sways men as the wind moves among the reeds in the marshes. He defies the Pharisees and emerges from their hatred unscathed. It is surely he alone who is to establish the Kingdom of God. When he returns from the other shore of the Lake we must urge him to lead us on immediately to Jerusalem. There is no time to be lost, for all the Jews are ready now at almost any time to break forth into rebellion. All they need is One sent of God to lead them. The time of the Feast of the Passover draws nigh. All the people will then be gathered together, from Lebanon to Idumea, even unto the dispersed among the Gentiles.

LEBBÆUS

Yes, after the recent pollution of the Temple
the people will readily rally under any
leader.

[Enter the innkeeper.]

SIMON

[To the innkeeper.]

We have travelled hard all last night and to-
day. We are weary and would rest.

INNKEEPER

I have no room for you, unless ye be the men
the Great Healer bade me prepare for.

PHILIP

These are the men.

INNKEEPER

Then I have room.

JUDAS

And food? We have come a long way, and
are an hungred!

INNKEEPER

All I have is at your disposal. Follow me and
I will myself see to it that you find rest and
refreshment.

*[Exeunt Simon, Lebbæus, Matthew,
Judas, and the innkeeper. Judas turns
and speaks from door, to Bartholomew
and Philip, ere he enters.]*

JUDAS

Brethren, see to it that we do not oversleep,
and have the Master pass us by and go on
to another village. For I have heard that
it is his wont to travel about from place
to place.

BARTHOLOMEW

Be not uneasy. Go within and rest. For you
will need rest sorely in the days to come, me-

thinks. There are days of trial and tribulation in store for all of us, times of temptation and despair and tribulation of spirit.

PHILIP

Go within and possess yourself with peace, Judas! But a little while and the Master comes, nor will we fail to summon you when he arrives.

[Exit Judas.]

BARTHOLOMEW

I like his eagerness, and his desire for the Kingdom.

PHILIP

He has not yet been tried in the fire.

BARTHOLOMEW

There is not one of us has, brother!

[Enter Simon, Jude, and Joses, brothers of Jesus.]

[They enter at right, and, as Bartholomew and Philip are in background by the shore of the lake, the latter are not seen until they step forward and make their presence manifest.]

SIMON

He is nothing but a half-brother of ours, yet for all Judea I would not behold him come to grief.

JOSES

What makes him act so strangely, to leave a good home and steady work—does he really think himself to be a prophet of God, as people say he does? He used to be an industrious carpenter, like the rest of us, until this unsteady madness laid hold on him.

JUDE

If he claimed power as a prophet only—if he would stop *there*, I would myself yield him a measure of belief.

JOSES

And that's just what I would *not* do! Have we not lived with him for years? Have we not seen him grow into manhood? But *does* he claim to be more than a prophet? . . . I fear your answer.

JUDE

He claims to be the Messiah.

JOSES

By the rod of Moses, he has indeed gone mad! Who ever heard of a carpenter being the Messiah! Let us tarry here no longer. He will be stoned to death for blasphemy. That will be the end of it all. And we, if we remain here, we will, like as not, be caught in the net of the same fate for being kinsmen of his.

[Philip and Bartholomew come forward.]

PHILIP

I gather from what you were saying that you
be brethren of the Master?

JOSES

Master! What Master?

BARTHOLOMEW

Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth.

JUDE

We are his half-brothers. Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth, is his father, by a second wife. He married Mary, our stepmother, and of her was Jesus born, when Simon, the oldest of us, was over ten years old.

PHILIP

Blessed are ye above all men, in having such a
brother!

JOSES

Cursed are we above all men in having such a brother! He shirks his work at the carpenter's bench at home; he runs abroad, preaching and inciting the people to tumult and discontent; he incurs the enmity of all classes of people by his rash words—and we, his kinsmen, will have to suffer along with him when he brings down ruin upon his head. Fingers of scorn will be pointed at us. It might go even further. We ourselves might be involved in his destruction.

BARTHOLOMEW

But do you not believe in him? Have you not heard of his wonderful healing of the sick?

SIMON

We have heard, but we do not give credence to such tales.

* * *

JUDE

Indeed, brother, do not include me in that. I have held all along that he has remarkable powers and that he is a holy man, wonderfully gifted of God. I have no quarrel with him as regards his prophesying and his healing the sick. But his claims to Messiahship! Probably he is a little beside himself in that respect.

[To Philip and Bartholomew.]

But tell me where he is. As you love him, I adjure you to tell me. I would save him from the Pharisees! He does not know the danger he is in.

PHILIP

He is not in as much danger as you think. The Pharisees would not dare maim a little finger of his, because the common people worship him. Great multitudes follow him about. All the other prophets spake to the powerful and mighty ones of earth. He alone speaks to the people.

JOSES

Come, we care not about that. Where is he?
Bring us to him. We would fetch him home
with us. He is needed at home.

SIMON

Trust not too much to the multitudes. They
are as fickle as a weather-cock.

JOSES

He is our brother. He never was anything
but a worker in wood, and now he spoils a
good carpenter for a poor prophet.

BARTHOLOMEW

Surely you jest! I will tell you that I have
with these very eyes beheld miracles he has
performed. Have I not seen him heal the
sick, restore sight to the blind, and cast out
devils? By these signs we, his disciples,
know of a surety that he is the Promised
One, the Saviour of Israel.

JOSES

It is you who jest in telling such incredible tales. He is our brother, Jesus. . . . He worked at the same bench with me year in and year out. How can he be the Messiah?

BARTHOLOMEW

Do not the prophets speak of the Son of Man as a divine being incarnate in the flesh of humanity?

PHILIP

He must of necessity be some one's brother.

JOSES

Well, I know naught of such high questions. But the Rabbi at Nazareth once told me that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David.

JUDE

Brethren, marvel not at what I say. Jesus *does* come of royal lineage. Mary, our step-

mother and his mother, *is* a descendant of King David. Though of a poor family, she has royal blood in her veins, though she keeps the story of it close and few know of it.

BARTHOLOMEW

Aye, I knew so! I knew so!

JUDE

[*Continuing.*

Also, brethren—you must needs remember how different Jesus always was from the rest of us. When we thought of nothing but gewgaws and playthings he used to sit on the hilltop back of our house, amid the flowers, and dream, and read the Scriptures. Many a time he said, even then, strange and wise things beyond the years of a child. And I have often heard him talk with angelic presences which he saw and conversed with, but which remained to me unseen and unheard. He once told me that he had seen and conversed with the angels of God.

SIMON

I see that you seem inclined to partake of the same foolishness: for you and mother Mary always took him too seriously.

JUDE

Mother Mary surely believes in him. She always believed him to be the Messiah. Once she told me of a strange vision vouchsafed her ere his birth.

SIMON

And why did not Joses and myself ever hear of all this—of Mary's descent, and of the vision?

JUDE

Because you would have scoffed at such things then as you do now.

JOSES

Aye, indeed, we are not so easily led astray by dreams and visions seen in the night.

SIMON

Let us forget this nonsense. I care for Jesus because he is my brother, and, Messiah or no Messiah, he is in great danger.

JOSES

He has gone mad. When we find him, wherein can we help him? Bethink yourselves if he is not already beyond our help. Besides, all we can do for him is to give him warning, for if we brought him home Nazareth would not receive him kindly. The last time he was home he aroused the villagers to fury by the things he said in the synagogue. Even then they would have cast him from the summit of that very hill whereon he used to stand to pray.

JUDE

Ah, Joses, there you touch upon a mystery. You yourself must confess that at that time he exerted a strange influence over those who would have slain him. He imperiously bade

them unhand him and a great awe overcame them and they stood aside, letting him depart through their midst, unharmed.

JOSES

As they would do with *anyone* reputed to be holy.

JUDE

Nay! It struck deeper than that! I almost believe that he is the Messiah he claims to be.

BARTHOLOMEW

[*Eagerly to Jude.*]

Only remain with us till he comes from across the lake. You cannot help but believe in him when you behold the power in his face. And, till he comes, Philip and I will discourse with you at large on the wonders he has wrought.

JOSES

Old wives' tales!

SIMON

So say I! Come on, Jude. Don't be a fool.
Leave the madman to his fate. There is
no help.

JUDE

Brethren, I will stay and see Jesus face to face
before I decide against his claims. But go
ye home. Father will need you at the bench.

JOSES

Aye!—for there are houses to build and
gain to be made—and much talking and
prophesying builds no houses. Come,
Simon!

[Exeunt Joses and Simon.]

*[Philip and Bartholomew embrace and
kiss Jude.]*

PHILIP

Welcome, brother of the Lord!

BARTHOLOMEW

Welcome, in the name of the Messiah!

PHILIP

Let them go and build their houses of wood and stone. But there are greater things to be builded—the Kingdom of God! With the Master we are to be joint builders of the New Jerusalem of which the prophets spake!

[Re-enter Judas.]

JUDAS

Will the Master never come? See! It is rapidly growing dark!

BARTHOLOMEW

Why do you not stay within and rest while you may?

JUDAS

I cannot. The desire to meet him face to face consumes me like a fire. Ah, ye know not how many years I have waited his coming to the world! Simon, Matthew, and Lebbaeus

sleep within, forspent with weariness. But
I could not sleep.

[*To Jude.*

Are you, too, a disciple of the Master?

JUDE

I am his brother. I arrived but recently to
warn him of certain perils which hung over
him.

[*A light is seen moving far out on the
Lake. Twilight falls rapidly.*

JUDAS

Look! A light! Is that not he?

[*A long silence.*

PHILIP

'Tis the light of some fisherboat, returning be-
lated after a day of arduous toil.

BARTHOLOMEW

The Galilean fishers never work so late unless
it be the time of the full moon. To-night
only the stars are in the sky.

PHILIP

The moon is at the full and will soon rise.

[During the conversation a boat takes form and draws up on the beach. The disciples hasten toward it.]

JUDAS

[Eagerly.]

Hail! Master!

FIRST FISHERMAN

Master us no masters! We be but simple fisherfolk.

SECOND FISHERMAN

But the master whom ye expect is not far behind us, in company with three others.

BARTHOLOMEW

[To Judas.]

He had Peter, James, and John with him—three fishermen. They are first in his love

because they were first to give up all they had and follow him. When he goes apart to pray they always go with him.

[The fishermen draw the boat up on the beach, drag out the nets, and prepare to go.]

[Another light is seen.]

JUDAS

Lo! Yon moves another light.

[Moving across to the door of the inn.]

I must wake those who sleep within.

[Exit Judas.]

FIRST FISHERMAN

Yes. That is he!

SECOND FISHERMAN

Let us wait here until he comes ashore. Let us ask him where to cast our nets to-morrow. He might reward us with another big haul. We have had no luck since morning.

PHILIP

[To fishers.]

You must not ask him to-night. He will be too tired.

FIRST FISHERMAN

Very well! Does he lodge here?

[Pointing at inn.]

BARTHOLOMEW

Yes.

SECOND FISHERMAN

We will see him the first thing in the morning.

FIRST FISHERMAN

And he need not be chary of us. We will divide up the profits with him. We will show him that we appreciate his help.

[Exeunt fishers.]

[Re-enter Judas, accompanied by Matthew, Lebbaeus, and Simon the Zealot.]

It rapidly grows dark, until only the vague outlines of the disciples are visible. They are dimly seen to crowd down to the beach as the light approaches. One standing clad in white is seen in the bow.

SIMON

Judas! He comes! Yonder comes the Deliverance of Israel!

[The disciples form in reverent ranks on either side, as the One in White steps from the boat. He walks silently and majestically across the stage and in at the door of the inn.

VOICES OF THE DISCIPLES

“Rabbi!” “Master!” “Messiah!”

[Peter, James, and John draw up the boat on the beach. John goes into the inn after Christ. Peter and James bide without.

MATTHEW

Why came ye across so late? We expected you ere sunset.

JAMES

We prayed apart but an hour, when many of the multitude, having procured boats, found out whither we had gone and came upon us. Then the Master had compassion on them, wept strangely, and must needs preach to them. This is what delayed us.

PETER

He preached from the hill-top, whither we had retired. The multitude filled the valley below.

JAMES

He said many wise and wonderful sayings. Never have I heard rabbi or scribe so eloquent as he.

PETER

And after the Master had finished talking, he healed divers of their ills. And before we knew it, the sun was hidden behind the purple summits of Carmel, and the blue smoke of twilight was filling the world.

PHILIP

Where are the multitudes now?

PETER

Look! On the Lake! There they come!

JAMES

Aye! Here they come, following closely after us.

LEBBÆUS

The Lake seems to be sprinkled full of golden stars!

[The Lake is seen to be full of moving lights.]

[Re-enter John.]

JOHN

The Master wishes to see the three new disciples from Jerusalem.

[Exeunt Lebbæus, Judas, Simon, into the inn. John remains.]

PETER

[Pointing to the moving lights.]

Look, John. The multitudes still follow us.

They seem never to hear enough of the Master's words, nor to have enough of his presence.

JOHN

I must beg them to let the Master rest. He is weary with the long day.

PETER

[With suppressed impatience.]

They seem to think that he needs neither food nor sleep. They think that he is altogether superhuman and in no wise as they are.

JOHN

[*Moved.*

The poor children! The poor lost sheep of Israel!

[The boats, with lights, draw closer and closer. Some land on the beach at back, some scatter to left and right and land where the beach is not visible. Then, from all entrances pilgrims overwhelm the stage. The moon rises from over the Lake. In the white ghostly light of it are seen sick men borne on pallets, men with crutches, blind men being led, etc. Several blind men grope to front alone.]

A FORMER PARALYTIC

Glory to the God of Israel! I walk for the first time in years! He but commanded me to walk, and it was accomplished!

ONE FORMERLY BLIND, *Now Seeing*

And I *see* for the first time in years! Ah, yon is the moon of my childhood . . . and there

it has been for years, and I saw it not in my blindness until this night. It covers all the face of the earth, and the bosom of the dancing waters of the Lake, with its glory—I thank thee, God!

A BLIND MAN, *Groping About*

Ah, would that I, too, might see the moon!
I have never seen it, nor the flowers, nor the birds, nor the green fields, in all my life!

A PILGRIM

Brethren, he whom we seek is within the inn. He came over in a boat just a little ahead of us. But we must not all crowd into the inn together. Let a few of us enter and implore him to come out and have compassion on the afflicted.

[Enter the innkeeper, attracted by the hubbub, his temper considerably ruffled.]

INNKEEPER

Indeed, and ye shall not come in, either severally or together! Unless you have lodgings here, none of you shall come in.

A VOICE

But we *will* go in!

ANOTHER VOICE

We would see the Master!

ANOTHER VOICE

If you do not wish us to go in, let him come unto us.

JOHN

[From near steps of the inn.]

Good people! Even the Great Healer of men's ills is at times in need of rest and space of leisure. His power cannot always go out of him without replenishment. Will you not allow him who has done so much for you time for sleep and refreshment?

A VOICE

We cannot wait. Some of us are at the point of death.

PETER

[*Testily.*

You will have to wait, whether you will or no!

INNKEEPER

A little more of this unruliness and I shall call on the Roman centurion for help. He stands ever ready to put down tumults.

JOHN

[*To Peter, who is about to speak angrily, laying his hand on his arm.*

Peace, Peter! Govern your temper. Remember that you are no longer Peter the fisherman, but Peter, the disciple of the Messiah!

PETER

I can hardly contain myself with such an inconsiderate folk. The Master has already

drawn on his power to the uttermost for them. And they neither show gratitude nor bate one jot of their importunity.

INNKEEPER

[*To Peter.*

Shall I send for the Romans?

PETER

No.

[*To the people.*

Good folk, be reasonable. Wait till morning, and the Master will heal you once more.

A LEADER OF THE PEOPLE

[*Turning to assemblage.*

Perhaps it would be better to wait till to-morrow! Remember, he has already done much for us. So let us, each one, disperse till daybreak.

A PILGRIM

Well, then, I am willing to wait, though I suffer grievously, and cannot sleep.

THE LEADER

Come, then, let us all go apart and rest.

[Exeunt pilgrims.]

INNKEEPER

I was never so pestered in all my life. I never saw anything like this, excepting when——

PETER

It is too late for the spinning of endless tales.

[To John.]

Let us within and snatch what rest we can.

[Exeunt innkeeper, John, and Peter.]

Enter Hillel and Ezra, two Pharisees.

They cast a few pebbles against the side of the inn. Enter servant of the innkeeper.

EZRA

[To servant.]

Have you done as we required of you?

SERVANT

[Bowing low.]

Yes, Rabbi.

EZRA

[To Hillel, vehemently.]

And now shall we bring to a speedy end this reviler of our sect—this pretender who stops not at any blasphemy against the Law and the Prophets and the person of Jehovah himself, so long as it subserves his vile purposes!

HILLEL

I cannot understand why the Council had not long ere this brought this fellow to sudden account.

EZRA

They are just men, and Justice must be sure of herself and move slow.

HILLEL

Let those in authority beware lest, with their tardy sessions, they let him slip through their fingers.

EZRA

This time we will make sure that he has no loophole of escape. All Israel will join in thanking us for our rapid action.

[*To servant.*]

Have you ascertained? Is he now within?

SERVANT

[*Bowing.*]

He abides within, master. Did I not inform you yesterday that he lodged here?

HILLEL

But that is not now.

SERVANT

Not less than an hour ago he returned from the other shore of the Sea of Galilee.

EZRA

How many accompany him?

SERVANT

Twelve. I would warn you to beware of them.
Many of them are rough fishermen.

HILLEL

We will not soil our hands with them. The
soldiers will quickly put their violence down.

EZRA

How long has he been within?

SERVANT

But a little while.

HILLEL

I mean how long has he made this inn his
abiding place?

SERVANT

Ten days.

EZRA

And has he during that time broken any of the
laws of Moses?

SERVANT

All of them, Rabbi! He calls himself Sent of God, and yet he sits at meat with publicans, harlots, and sinners. He regards not the Sabbath day. He says that man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man; and once, when one of your holy sect rebuked him for his loose manner of living, he replied that he came to heal the sick, not the well!

HILLEL

He is a blasphemer. The man exceeds all bounds.

[*To servant.*]

Where lodges he?

SERVANT

In the room that opens on the shore.

EZRA

That is enough. You may go now—and God and the local Sanhedrin will reward you. I

will bring the matter of your service up before the next meeting of the Council.

SERVANT

May God bless you with old age, masters.

[*Exit.*

EZRA

And now to the centurion's house!

HILLEL

Have we sufficient grounds of complaint to warrant Roman interference? The laws that this man has broken are religious, not political.

EZRA

Do not his disciples hail him as the Messiah?

HILLEL

Then we can easily prove that he seeks to raise a tumult. And he *is* dangerous. We must no longer delay. The time of the Pass-

over draws nigh, and if he goes down to Jerusalem to inflame the multitude against us there——

HILLEL

They will stone him to death!

EZRA

They will *not* stone him to death. Has anyone cast a stone at him yet? And he has already turned hundreds against us—for he is a man of great power.

[Re-enter servant, hastily.]

SERVANT

While passing by, I heard them talking apart and listened closely to their conversation. And, oh, masters, they are on the eve of starting a great uprising. I heard them speaking of the twelve tribes of Israel, and how each one of the twelve disciples was to be governor over a tribe. And the Wonder-worker himself claimed direct command from God. He is to be King!

EZRA

Enough! Come with us. You must repeat this in the presence of the Roman commander. When he has heard of this he will take the carpenter of Nazareth into custody immediately.

[Exeunt Pharisees and servant. Enter, from the inn, John and Judas.]

JOHN

You were a long time with the Master alone!
'Tis a privilege vouchsafed to few.

JUDAS

Yes, I was with him a long time. We talked of many things.

JOHN

Tell me, I pray you, what you talked about.
I am eager to hear every word that falls like a pearl from his lips.

JUDAS

As soon as I came into his presence, he arose from the couch on which he reclined, and took my hand, calling me by my proper name. He told me all that I ever did. Hail, richest and poorest man in all Judea!—thus he greeted me.

I am indeed the richest man in Judea, according to mouth-to-mouth rumor, I replied—But poorest also? How can that be? I beg you to unfold the meaning of your dark saying, Master!

Poor are you, Judas, in things of the spirit, he replied. After that he said many things which I cannot understand. Suffice to say that his wonderful words and the light that shines forth from his face have convinced me that he is the Messiah for whom Israel waits—but——

JOHN

And why stumble you over that last word as a blind man stumbles over a stone?

JUDAS

One thing he bade me do, the reason for which I cannot comprehend. When I offered him, for his own use, all my wealth (and it was no easy thing for me to do that), he bade me return with him to Jerusalem, sell all I had, and give the gold to the poor. Not until then can you become a true disciple of mine, he said. And when I expressed my willingness to obey him, but begged him to let me rather hire soldiers and bribe officials with the money, that he might the more easily win to the throne of David, he shook his head, smiled, and answered not.

JOHN

The cause of God needs faith, not gold! Be-
think you of the story of Gideon—how,
with a handful of warriors, he won victory
over a great multitude, because God fought
on his side. Are you not familiar with the
prophecies which tell of the coming of the
Son of Man!

JUDAS

Yes, and those same prophecies tell how God chooses to work His will through man and the Power of men.

JOHN

True. Through men who are all aflame with the vision of the coming glory of the Kingdom of God. But not through Mammon and the strength of mercenaries whose souls are not one with ours.

JUDAS

Then must the Master bide his time till he has a sufficient following of those who believe in him.

JOHN

Ah, you begin to see aright, and not perversely, after the manner of men. Nor will the Messiah need such a great band of followers as you deem. Perhaps we twelve, at the

appointed time, might be transferred into a host. With the omnipotent arm of God sweeping in the van of the battle; with the cohorts of the seraphim coming to our aid, we might, indeed, trample the kings of the world like dust beneath our feet.

JUDAS

In that case I am willing to sell all. Forgive me my blindness. But somewhat I must reserve of my wealth, for the comfort of the Master and ourselves, O John!

JOHN

Nay, not even that—God will provide, does provide, for us from day to day. Ah, Judas, your love is great, but it is blind like the love of the Greeks!

JUDAS

I call Jehovah to witness how I love this Man of Nazareth . . . yet, I confess I hardly grasp his intent. But he who heals the sick

and knows all things cannot be at fault. It is *I* who am at fault.

[Enter Simon, hurriedly and perplexed.]

SIMON

[To John.]

The Master would see you within.

JOHN

He must not consume himself like this. Between his disciples and those who would be healed, he gets no rest. I am anxious for him. For to-morrow we have a long journey.

[Exit John.]

JUDAS

[Eagerly to Simon.]

Well!

[They stare at each other fixedly for a space.]

Come! What think you, Simon?

SIMON

That he is the Messiah. I do not doubt that.
He had me alone with him but now! Ah,
he is wonderful—yet——

JUDAS

Ah, what inexplicable thing has he required of
you?

SIMON

Something I cannot understand. He is to be
King of the Jews: that means that he must
first expel the Romans from Judea. And
yet he bade me cast away my dagger.

JUDAS

That one with the jewelled hilt which was
given you when you joined the Zealots?

SIMON

The same. The one that John of Giscala gave
me. With it have I full often avenged
desecrations of the Laws of God.

JUDAS

But why did he bid you cast it away? Did he give any reasons?

SIMON

None beyond a dark saying. As soon as I came before him he asked me, Simon, my son, what is that which you carry in the folds of your bosom?

Nothing, Master, I replied.

Nay, hold it forth, he returned.

I have naught but a dagger, I admitted.

I drew it forth.

See—it is dark with blood! he exclaimed.

Nay, you mistake, I replied. I polish it every day.

The same blood that darkens the blade of this dagger also darkens your soul, he said, his voice quivering like a woman's with a strange pity. Come! he commanded; come! We opened a door and stepped out into the moonlight. The waters of the Lake sparkled at our feet. Fling it far, he suddenly

commanded, turning sternly upon me; fling it far out—let it be lost to the clasp of your hand forever! I obeyed like one in a dream. It flew from my hand, and scattered as it were a shower of diamonds when it smote the waves. My dagger, which was consecrated to the avenging of the wrongs of Israel!

Those that use violence perish by violence, he told me as I left him, troubled at heart.

JUDAS

Simon, I, too, was troubled at heart as I left him. He bade me give up all my wealth to the poor.

[They stare at each other dumbly for a moment.]

SIMON

What does this all mean? Does he hope to win the Kingdom for God without swords, without money—with the naked hand?

JUDAS

Simon! We must not doubt! Perhaps he leans wholly on the Power of God, as did our Fathers. Perhaps he has strength and power which we as yet wot not of!

SIMON

Well, anyhow, in spite of temporary misgivings, I am satisfied that he knows best. He must have unsuspected sources of Power to draw from, as you suggest. We must trust him, and sweep on to victory under his banner. Then, after he sits on the throne of Israel, will come our reward. You will get a province in place of the loss of your wealth. I shall govern a tribe. We are twelve. There are twelve tribes in Israel.

JUDAS

What mean you? That each of the twelve followers of the Master is to rule over a tribe?

SIMON

The very same. James, one of the sons of Zebedee, confided in me to that effect while you were closeted with the Master.

JUDAS

But does the Master confirm this with his own words?

SIMON

I do not know. But at some time he must have. Why else should he have chosen just twelve, and no more?

[Enter, in moonlight, Sabinus, the Roman centurion, cloaked.]

JUDAS

[Wheeling on him.]

What would you, sir?

SABINUS

I seek a man, one Jesus. He who heals the sick and condemns the Pharisees.

SIMON

Have you aught to be healed of?

SABINUS

I come not to be healed.

JUDAS

Then what would you with the Master, and why do you affect such mystery of manner?

SABINUS

[Throwing back cloak and revealing himself.]

I am Sabinus, the Roman centurion in charge of the troops here at Capernaum.

SIMON

Then you come to take him prisoner!

[Clutching where he formerly kept his dagger.]

[To Judas.]

Alas, I have thrown it away!

SABINUS

If I come to take him, why have I come alone?
Tell me, where is he?

JUDAS

[Hesitating.]

He is not within.

SABINUS

I mean him no harm. Answer me truly.

JUDAS

Well, he *is* within, then, if you would know.

SABINUS

Go inform him that Sabinus, the centurion,
would speak with him immediately!

[Exit Simon, to re-enter almost immediately.]

SIMON

He sleeps. We must not waken him.

SABINUS

Then bring me one of the fishermen whom he affects the most, Peter, or John, the son of Zebedee.

[Exit Simon, to re-enter with Peter.]

PETER

Sabinus!

[They embrace, while Simon and Judas look on in wonderment.]

What do you here?

SABINUS

Peter! I come in haste to warn the Master of the peril that hangs over him. The Pharisees have informed against him. They say that he wishes to set himself up as the King of Judea. In consequence, I shall be obliged to take him into custody this very night. But he who has healed my daughter, sick unto death—him I cannot see come to harm. Bid him leave here before the changing of the watch.

PETER

There will be a place in the Kingdom for such as you, generous-hearted Gentile!

SABINUS

I am not bothering about this Kingdom you Jews seem to be so fond of dreaming about, this Kingdom half in heaven, half on earth. Still, your Master is a wonderful man, and the gods have not sent him into the world without somewhat of a divine gift. I love him for what he has done for me. I would save him from mischance. So see to it that he is warned—that you flee the place immediately. I now go to perform my duty.

PETER

Your duty?

SABINUS

[Martially and impersonally.]

My duty as a soldier and a Roman. If the Healer has not left before this watch ex-

pires, I must come with my soldiers and take him.

[Exit Sabinus.]

SIMON

The Romans are a strange people.

PETER

Thus have they conquered the world.

JUDAS

But whither shall we flee?

PETER

To Jersusalem!

JUDAS

Jehovah must indeed be with us. Never could there be a fitter time. The city will be crowded with worshippers at the Temple. A word from the Master will fill them all with a divine fury.

[The moon passes behind a cloud.]

PETER

The Kingdom of God presses upon us.

[Exeunt all into the inn. After a space the twelve apostles pass across the stage, with Christ, dimly seen, at their head, and disappear to the right.]

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE I

The palace gardens of Herod at Cæsarea Philippi. To left, door opening onto Herod's Palace. To right, back, stands an altar to Apollo.

Herod and his chief steward discovered at rise of curtain.

HEROD

See that the banquet be prepared at the appointed time.

STEWARD

It shall be ready, honorable Tetrarch.

HEROD

Broach a cask of my finest wine. Set the tables with the golden service my father was wont to use when he entertained ambassadors of the first rank from Rome.

STEWARD

As you command, honorable Tetrarch.

HEROD

Be prepared to entertain at least ten more at the principal table. I am in receipt of news that Pilate, the Procurator of Judea, comes to visit me.

STEWARD

You shall have a banquet fit for the palate of the Emperor himself, most honorable Tetrarch.

[Exit steward.]

HEROD

[Clapping hands in summons.]

Slave!

[A pausc.]

Slave!

[Sharper.]

SLAVE!

[Enter Zabdiel, a Jewish slave.]

What, Zabdiel, dog! You answer tardily—you deserve to be whipped! Bring me my morning oblation!

[Exit slave, to return shortly with a bowl of wine. Herod takes the bowl, and, crossing stage, halts before the altar and invokes Apollo.]

HEROD

Hail, Apollo! Bright god of the world's gladness! To thee this libation I pour. Give ear to me, child of Latona and brother of Venus—give ear to me, and banish thou from my heart this melancholy which possesseth me. Lift from my soul this fear of the God of the Jews. Be THOU my god, for thou art the king of gladness, and thy feet move ever to the melody of many harps! Hear, O Apollo, hear!

[Pours libation, and hands back the empty bowl to the slave, who shudders as he takes it.]

HEROD

Why do you tremble, knave?

ZABDIEL

I am a Jew—I fear the wrath of Jehovah!

HEROD

Apollo is greater than He!

*[Herod also shudders involuntarily,
then angers at his weakness and turns
wrathfully on Zabdiel to hide it.]*

HEROD

Avoid my sight! I will henceforth have none
but Greeks to wait upon my person. For
this you shall forth to the vineyards!

ZABDIEL

God's will be done, Master!

HEROD

[Threatening.

Go! I like not your countenance of gloom.

But the Greeks wear cheer on their faces!

[Exit Zabdiel.

HEROD

[Again clapping his hands.

Ho, Antinous!

*[Enter, with alacrity, the Greek slave,
Antinous.*

HEROD

Bring hither a goblet of wine!

[Exit Antinous.

HEROD

*[Solus.*Yonder comes Pilate. It were good that he
come upon me as I am about to pour a li-
bation to Cæsar!*[Re-enter Antinous, with wine.*

HEROD

[Taking goblet.]

Antinous! Where were you when I summoned before?

ANTINOUS

I was weaving chaplets of roses for the feast—
I had thought Zabdiel——

HEROD

[Interrupting.]

Zabdiel goes forth to the vineyards! Henceforth you are to attend upon my person entirely. I will have no more Jews about me!

[Flourish of trumpets. Enter Pilate and retinue, as Herod stands, goblet in hand.]

HEROD

[With affected surprise.]

Ah! Procurator! Welcome to Cæsarea!
Come! Join with me in the pouring of my daily libation to Cæsar!

PILATE

Willingly. But let me pour it. It is befitting that I, being Procurator of all Judea, and viceroy of the Emperor, should do so.

[Herod hands over the goblet to Pilate.]

PILATE

To thee, O Emperor!

[Pouring out wine.]

Sole representative of the gods on earth, monarch of the habitable world, thyself a god! Mayest thou live and rule a thousand years of peace, and may thy coffers be ever filled with tribute of gold from all the nations!

HEROD

So be it!

RETINUE

So be it!

[Pilate returns the cup to Herod, who, in turn, hands it to Antinous.]

HEROD

And now, friend Pilate, due honor having been paid the Emperor, whence this sudden visit? Have I done aught that Rome mislikes? I adjure you, by our former friendship at Rome, to tell me.

PILATE

My visit has naught to do with the Emperor. I have come on a mission of private enterprise. I have come all the way from Jerusalem to seek advice from you as touching a certain matter. I am more a soldier than a diplomat, as you well know, and am not versed in the nice points of the varying customs of the different nations. Readier am I with the sword than with the pen. But I had always prided myself on my knowledge of men and my ability to manage them.

[Sighs.]

However, these Jews seem to be a class of men by themselves!

HEROD

Ah!

[*Frowns.*]

I understand. You have run counter to one of their many superstitions!

PILATE

I shall tell you in few words my difficulty. But a fortnight ago, while stationed at Strato's Tower, by the sea, I sent ahead, under cover of night, the ensigns and emblems of Roman sovereignty, meaning to follow by daylight into Jerusalem. I had been advised by those who knew somewhat of Jewish character not to do this. I was told that such an act would be sure to cause a tumult. But, thought I, why should a people which has become subject to the Emperor quarrel with the symbols of his sovereignty? However, as events proved, I had been rightly advised. For, with the break of day, the news of what I had done ran about the country with incredible swiftness. Before I could get my

soldiers under way, hundreds of Jews had already arrived from Jerusalem, to protest against what they called a sacrilege. I resolved to silence their clamor with a show of sternness. I threatened them with death if they did not become quiet. At a given signal from me my soldiers surrounded the multitude and menaced them with the naked sword. I cried out to them that they should either admit Cæsar's images into their city or be there cut to pieces: then, as if at a signal, they all fell down, bared their necks, and cried out with one voice that they would sooner be slain than have their Law transgressed. What can one do with such a people?

HEROD

If you knew the Jews as well as I do, you would not marvel at this.

PILATE

Their superstition is indeed prodigious.

HEROD

Their religion is their life, Procurator. My father knew well how to manage them. He built them the great temple at Jerusalem—and then wrung from them all he wished.

PILATE

You mean that they are so obstinate that they will suffer death rather than concede a point of their Law?

HEROD

Have you not recently found that to be true? There is hardly a Jew so poor-spirited but will defy the whole world rather than break a single commandment of Moses, their Law-giver. Even those who are slaves will make trouble.

PILATE

With such a spirit how have they become a conquered people?

HEROD

It is because of this spirit that they *have*. No sooner are they masters of themselves than they fall to fighting among each other as to whether the Law requires that both the wrists and the hands ought to be washed before eating, or the hands merely—or some such trivial matter!

PILATE

They are a nation of madmen!

HEROD

Aye! And those who rule them best humor their madness and take advantage of it.

PILATE

As a soldier it irks me to do this.

HEROD

'Tis the only course. I myself have had my own bitter experience in running counter to

their superstitions. For a time I jeopardized my very life by having had the Prophet John beheaded.

PILATE

I have heard somewhat of him: he lived like one possessed, in the wilderness, 'tis said; ate locusts and wild honey; ran half-naked; delivered long harangues to those who sought after him. And you put him to death! Why did you do so? How could *he* have harmed *you*?

HEROD

He continually reviled and attacked me before the people. I grew afraid of his power and had him put to death.

PILATE

Grew afraid of a vagabond's power! Can a beggar so sway the minds of men?

HEROD

Yes! here in Judea. Thousands would have obeyed his least command. At a word from him my life would have been forfeit. For he called himself the Forerunner.

PILATE

I am puzzled. The Forerunner? Of what or whom?

HEROD

Of the Christ.

PILATE

Ah! Of HIM I have heard somewhat, too! You mean that he claimed to forerun and prepare the way for this Christ, this king whom the Jews expect! And do they misdeem that this expected king of theirs can conquer the Romans?

HEROD

They do. For he will be more than a mortal man. He will be what the Greeks call a demigod.

PILATE

Somewhat like Hercules, I suppose. With us Romans, gods and demigods no longer walk the world. All that belongs to years long past, to the golden age of which our poets sing.

HEROD

But with the Jews their God is always walking the earth; their golden age is yet to come.

PILATE

A foolish people!

[Suddenly.

But, tell me, you affect not these superstitions?

HEROD

[Hesitating.

Nay. I am more a Roman than a Jew. My family is Idumean. But for policy's sake I make an outward show of respect toward their traditions and beliefs.

PILATE

Which worship you—the gods of sensible men, the powers of nature, the deities which move the sun and moon, which govern the tides of the sea, the growth of grain, and the lives of men—or this absurd god of theirs, whose works are inevident and invisible, and who has neither image nor sign that his worshippers may know him?

HEROD

Behold this altar to Apollo! Is not that answer enough?

[Enter captain of palace guards.]

HEROD

[To captain:]

What would you?

CAPTAIN

I first crave your pardon, O Tetrarch, for the news that I bring.

HEROD

'Tis granted. Say on!

CAPTAIN

But evil are the tidings that I bring and much
to be wondered at.

HEROD

Say on! You shall not be harmed.

CAPTAIN

[With fear in his voice.]

John the Baptist has risen from the dead.

HEROD

[Shaking with fear.]

Why, 'tis impossible! I saw his severed head
with my own eyes—on a charger!

[Turning savagely on the captain.]

You lie! What new conspiracy is this?

CAPTAIN

[Flinging himself at Herod's feet.]

Remember your word, master!

HEROD

[Recovering himself with an effort.]

Rise! Fear not!

PILATE

[To captain.]

Why come you to us with such an absurd tale?

Risen from the dead! Who ever heard of
such a thing?

CAPTAIN

[Answering Pilate.]

I—

HEROD

[Interrupting.]

I saw them carry the body out. I saw his
severed head with the eyes shut.

[Turning infuriated on the captain.]

Whence have you this dreadful tale?

PILATE

[Surprised at Herod.

Dreadful tale, forsooth! Then you give credence, O Herod, to such an idle rumor? Why, in Rome we would have had this man stripped and whipped for his foolish babble.

HEROD

[Obsessed with the rumor; not heeding Pilate; seizes captain by the wrist.

Have you seen him?

CAPTAIN

I have seen him. He is the very image of John the Baptist. There could be no mistaking him. And once more he preaches and calls people to repentance.

HEROD

[Stricken with superstitious terror.

Where bides he now?

CAPTAIN

Here—in Cæsarea.

HEROD

Where and when was he last seen?

CAPTAIN

I myself saw him but a while ago—in the gardens nigh the Temple to Pan.

HEROD

[Hoarsely to Pilate.]

Come, let us go within! The air, methinks, has turned chill of a sudden——

CAPTAIN

Shall I see to it that the guards are doubled?

HEROD

Who can guard one's self against a man who overcomes death?

[At this juncture the captain of the guards begins to stare fixedly into the distance. Herod and Pilate, looking in the same direction, appear transfixed.]

CAPTAIN

[Awe-stricken.]

Yon is he, with his disciples!

HEROD

Ah!

[To captain.]

Follow him. See if it be he or his ghost. But do not molest him. Would I had not slain him!

[Exit captain of the guards.]

PILATE

'Tis a monstrous land and a monstrous people. In Italy I would have laughed at this. In Judea, I tremble! I am already myself half a Jew. . . .

[The palace door is flung open. Music heard within. Steward appears.]

CHIEF STEWARD

[Bowing low.]

Master, the feast is prepared; the tables are ready, and some of the guests have already assembled.

HEROD

[Shaking himself free from the Thing that haunts him.]

Come, friends, within we shall have companionship, the latest gossip and news from Rome. Wine! Music!

[Exeunt all through the palace door.]

SCENE II

Further on in the garden.

John, Thomas, and Peter discovered at rise of curtain.

JOHN

My heart is desolate! He has fled from even us, in whom he has hitherto been wont to trust and confide. He has gone to the mountain, alone, to pray.

PETER

Be of good cheer! I know he has not forsaken us.

THOMAS

It seems to me that he labors under great tribulation of spirit. Where be those who he said would come to make him king?

JOHN

Be assured; they will come.

THOMAS

Yet why should he flee these men who would hail him as king? Is not that the mark at which he has aimed these several years?

JOHN

In the fulfilment of his time he shall be crowned—but not by human hands: the angels of God and the seraphim will crown him.

THOMAS

The angels and the seraphim I have never seen
—and until they flash into visibility before
my very eyes, I will not believe that any
prophet, however great, can evoke from the
sky the cohorts of God—not even the Be-
loved One!

PETER

Then you do not believe in him! 'Tis incred-
ible, after all you have seen.

THOMAS

All I have seen I believe. That which I have
not seen I do not believe.

JOHN

You believe not that he is the Messiah, then?

THOMAS

I would indeed rejoice were he to prove himself
the Hope of Israel.

PETER

Has he not thus far fulfilled all his promises?

THOMAS

Is it meet that the God-appointed King of Israel should flee for his very life from the Pharisees of Jerusalem?

JOHN

When the fulness of his time comes, he will not flee.

THOMAS

[*Dejectedly.*

Will it ever come?

[*A pause.*

And here we now are, put to flight like sheep before wolves. A fine way to begin the Kingdom!

PETER

Because you have not faith you will not turn traitor and desert the Master? At this time of times when he needs us all the most?

THOMAS

[Stung to the quick.

Nay! I will follow him even to the death—
Prophet, Healer, Messiah—whatever he
prove to be!

JOHN

[Affected by the sincerity of Thomas.

Only have faith in him, Thomas. But, lo!
yonder come those who would crown him.

[Enter a party of Galileans.

PETER

I know all of them. They are fellow-citizens
of mine.

FIRST GALILEAN

Ah, Peter! Where bides he whom you follow?

THOMAS

*[To find if Christ's prophecy of their
coming be true.*

What would you with him?

FIRST GALILEAN

We have come to gladden his heart with a crown of gold.

[Showing crown.]

THOMAS

By whose authority would you crown him?

SECOND GALILEAN

By the authority of the people of Galilee who tire of paying Roman taxes and imposts. There are thousands who would acclaim him king, if we but crowned him.

FIRST GALILEAN

And if we first hail him as such, when he sits on the throne of all Judea, Galilee and its interests will be first in his heart.

PETER

Return to your homes, brethren, for know that at the appointed time God himself will

crown him, after a wonderful and unheard-of fashion.

JOHN

He is not to be crowned of men, but through God. He saw you coming, in a vision, and fled to avoid you.

FIRST GALILEAN

He saw us coming and fled to avoid us, did he?

SECOND GALILEAN

A pretty Messiah, this—to flee from the crown he coveted and fain would accept, were he not too weak to take it! Oh, for another Maccabee to fight for the Cause of the Children of Israel, as of yore!

FIRST GALILEAN

And now we plainly see that he is not worthy of a crown: death should be his portion; he has deluded half of Judea!

SECOND GALILEAN

He has wrought miracles all these years to none effect——

FIRST GALILEAN

We will have no more patience with him. We will seek him no further. He is an impostor.
[*Exeunt Galileans.*]

THOMAS

Behold! By *that* you can see how the people have begun to feel. Something must be done soon, or we shall all be taken and crucified. We shall not much longer be permitted to go down to Jerusalem in a body for festivals, with the Master casting words about like live scorpions and the bite of vipers. The Pharisees are already flayed raw by his condemnation of them.

[*Peter and John bow their heads, sorrowfully and answer nothing. A long silence intervenes. Thomas paces up and down in sorrowful thought.*]

PETER

[To John.]

'Tis time we depart. The Master bade us meet him, with James, at the foot of the mount whither he retired to pray.

JOHN

Yes, 'tis time for us to go to him. For there is a new thing in his face which I have never seen there before, and which, I must confess, fills my soul with a strange foreboding.

[To Thomas.]

Of course you know that we foregather nigh the temple of Pan, at sunset to-day?

THOMAS

'Tis well you informed me. I knew it not.

PETER

The Master missed you the other day.

THOMAS

That was three days ago, when I discoursed all day with the priest of Pan concerning the nature of God. I have found that he, too, worships a God who is One and whose Spirit informs All.

PETER

[Impatiently.]

Now you see how it is! You leave the presence of the Master to walk and talk with the Pagans. Is it any wonder that you doubt him?

JOHN

Come, Peter, we must make haste. He already expects us.

[Exeunt Peter and John.]

[Thomas pacing backward and forward, immersed in deep thought, and sighing from time to time.]

THOMAS

[Solus.

And yet not John, not Peter, not James, loves him with a love surpassing mine. But I—I must see—I must hear—I must feel—Ah, God, have mercy upon me!

[Enter Judas and Simon, disconsolate.

JUDAS

[Almost fiercely.

Yea! I have given up all for him—all—ALL—and do you think that I would have gone to such an extreme were I not convinced that he is the One who has come to lead Israel to victory over the Gentiles?

SIMON

And if he prove after all not to be the Messiah?

THOMAS

[Suddenly, from behind.

Aye! If he prove not to be the Messiah!

JUDAS

[Wheeling on him.]

I know that he is the Messiah, because of the wonders he has worked, the sick he has healed.

THOMAS

Then why this delay, this hesitation from day to day? When we set out from Capernaum at the time of the last festival, to go down to Jerusalem, we reeled drunk with the joy of the coming Kingdom; we already seemed to see the circle of the heavens ablaze with cohorts of seraphim and cherubim clad in celestial armor. At that time I did not doubt. I had no reason to doubt. But what came of it all? A few disputes with the Pharisees, the healing of a sick man here and there—and then our foes began to close in about us—the Lawgivers, the Pharisees, the Sadducees—and we, WE, the followers of him who would be King and Saviour of Israel—yea, he, himself—fled like run-

away slaves who take to the wilderness to escape punishment for disobedience!

SIMON

Judas! What have you to answer to that?

JUDAS

Listen, Thomas—for you, by doubting, have awakened still more the fire within me, that began to smoulder even before we fled from Jerusalem. I have pondered the problem long, and, little by little, it has been given to me to understand. I understand all now. Like a revelation it has come clear to me on the instant—why the Messiah, the Chosen of God, should flee from before the wrath of men. It is the care of the world, the clogging of the flesh in which his being moves, that weakens day by day the Power within him. So, Chosen of Jehovah though he be, day by day his light darkens and wanes in the night of the world's unbelief!

[With great earnestness.]

It is we, it is we, who must urge him on to the fulfilment of that for which he came!

SIMON

And how?

JUDAS

I know not how as yet. I must consider; and, when I have considered, I shall not palter, I shall act!

THOMAS

Sometimes I even wish that we might forget the Kingdom. I weary of all this travail. The love of the Master is, after all, enough kingdom for me.

[Thomas starts to leave.]

SIMON

Thomas, whither wend you?

THOMAS

I go to hold further converse with the priest of Pan, if he be free from the sacrifices at this hour.

JUDAS

[With all the religious ferocity of the Jew.]

Idolater!

THOMAS

Why, how now, Judas?

JUDAS

Go, and discourse with the priest of Pan concerning his pagan gods of wood and stone. Go, bide with him forever since you dare to doubt!

THOMAS

Nay, I dare not believe what I begin to hope, what I begin to dream, of the Kingdom!

[Exit Thomas.]

JUDAS

[With great fire.]

Simon! Simon! The whole world shall ring, if I succeed in that which, for the glory of

God, I must do! But are you strong enough to accept, and to keep this thing in your heart?

SIMON

Have I not been your lifelong friend, through good and ill?

JUDAS

You must keep what I am about to tell you as close as your very life. It is this:

[A pause.]

Every time we go up to Jerusalem the Master is wont to go apart with the favored three, is he not, and pray in a certain garden?

SIMON

Aye! 'Tis called the Garden of Gethsemane. It lies toward Bethany, where live Lazarus and his two sisters.

JUDAS

The next time we journey down to the Holy City I will acquaint the High Priest with

this custom of his. Then if he do not immediately call down the Power of God and vindicate his promises, I will force him to do so!

SIMON

[Taken aback.]

But that would be betrayal!

JUDAS

'Twill be a glorious betrayal! 'Tis a stragem, which, if it fail not—and it cannot fail, he being the Chosen One of God——

SIMON

[Breaking in with astonishment.]

Judas, have you gone mad?

JUDAS

[Rapt.]

Thus at a single stroke I will betray him most gloriously into that Kingdom for which he came; for, caught at last in a trap from

which there is no escape save by superhuman means, he will hesitate no longer; he will withhold his divine strength no more; he will pronounce the Mighty Word, the night will straightway flash everywhere with winnowing wings of fire, and, at that moment, the Kingdom will have come!

SIMON

[Stammering with amazement.]

You—you—would dare—such a—stratagem?

JUDAS

For the glory of the Kingdom of God what would I not dare? I would cast my soul into the balance for it. And, after it is over and done with, ages to come will glorify me for the faith of my boldness—my name will live unto all generations of men! I shall be known as the Right Arm of the Messiah—greater than Peter, greater than John—because I dared!

SIMON

And you will not let the rest of the twelve into the stratagem?

JUDAS

No! We must hold it between ourselves. They might not approve, or, approving, might not be as bold as we.

SIMON

[Tentatively.]

It were well, perhaps, to do as you plan . . .
But I? . . . Darkness sits over my heart.
Judas, I fear . . . I fear . . . A sudden trembling goes through all my joints!

JUDAS

Simon, arouse yourself. What! is the zealot in you dead?

SIMON

Yea, ever since he bade me cast my dagger aside.

JUDAS

I need no help, then—I will work it all alone,
will stand forever alone.

SIMON

And if you fail?

JUDAS

I cannot fail—for this was ordained from the beginning. And think, Simon, what a jest it will be against the Pharisees—to the garden will I lead them. They will carry themselves proudly and arrogantly, and think to take him without a single blow. They will think that I have truly betrayed him into their hands—then, lo, in a lightning-flash, the Power and the Thunder of God will terribly break forth about them. They will find themselves hedged in on all sides by shining and awful shapes with swords of cloven flame. We will enter in triumph into the Holy City, attended by the seraphim of Jehovah. Then will the Perfect Year be-

gin. Death and oppression will vanish from among men. All nations will turn their countenances toward the Temple, in universal prayer. All things will be made new.

SIMON

I can hardly conceive of it. 'Twill indeed be a wonderful change if it come about as you say.

JUDAS

And I shall accomplish it all with a simple word and a kiss—with the Kiss of Brotherhood that he taught us to use toward each other—I will come up to him and kiss him, that those who follow me may know which is he.

SIMON

The wonder of your stratagem grows upon me. Ah, Judas, if you but succeed, if you make no mistake in what you conceive the Master to be! And yet I fear strangely for you. . . . I see yonder among the trees

a Roman soldier. He sees us. He comes this way. We must cease talking of the Messiah.

JUDAS

Why, 'tis the very captain who gave us warning to flee from Capernaum the last time we went up to Jerusalem.

SIMON

The very same! What brings him here alone and away from his command?

JUDAS

We shall presently know.

[Enter Sabinus, the Roman centurion.]

JUDAS

Sabinus, what would you here?

SABINUS

Listen! I have been made a new man by a sudden vision, come verily of God. In the

middle watch of the night, when all the world was asleep, it came to me. Methought I beheld the tribes of all the world gathered in one on the face of an illimitable plain. Yet they bare no weapons. They carried in their hands palms and olive branches. Then they started to march like a host advancing to battle. But their battle-cry was a song of love and peace and goodwill. And they seemed to be going to the crowning of a king. Then the vision changed, and I saw One who sate on a throne reaching from heaven to earth. And when I was vouchsafed a glimpse of the face of him who was to be crowned king, behold, it was none other than he, the Healer and Prophet, Jesus of Nazareth. A hand reached down from heaven, from out a cloud of darkness, thunder, and flashes of fire, and set a shining crown upon his head. And a Voice cried, Behold, the Lord of Life has come. Let all men love one another! I woke from the vision, shaken of soul . . .

[*Brokenly.*

Ah, how can I make plain the unutterable change that has taken place within me! Where is the Master? Lead me to him, that I may pledge him my sword and my life.

SIMON

He is a strange man! I fear he will have none of your sword, as he would have none of my dagger.

JUDAS

Great is your faith, Sabinus! There is no faith so great in all Israel! Come, we go even now to the Master, and we will bring you to him.

[Exeunt Simon, Judas, and Sabinus.]

[Enter Mary Magdalen, and Joanna, wife of Churza, the Steward.]

JOANNA

I am told that he is here in Cæsarea. So, therefore, let us rest a space, since he is so close at hand.

MARY

We have come far. I, too, am weary, and fain would rest. But I must come into his presence now, lest I die.

JOANNA

You have already half-slain my soul with your haste.

MARY

I would find him and wash his feet with tears of repentance and wipe them dry with my hair.

JOANNA

Your grief is indeed great!

MARY

If he will but forgive me! For I was mad indeed to seek him as my lover after the manner of men.

JOANNA

After what other manner could he love you, strange woman?

MARY

After the manner of God—with a love that pities, that touches the soul and heals it of all its earthly wounds. He heals the bodies of men. I know he can and will yet do greater—I would have him cleanse my soul to whiteness, and heal it of its sins!

JOANNA

Can he work so great a miracle, Messiah though he be?

MARY

Joanna! I know that thing which even his disciples know not as yet: He is more than a prophet, more than a mere healer of the sick, more than a leader in Israel, he is the very Son of God!

JOANNA

The Son of God! . . . Nay, child! . . .

MARY

By my midnight vigils I swear it; by all my tears of repentance shed in the dark watches of the night; by the soul that even now begins to burst into a new life within me—by all of these things, Joanna, I swear it, that he is the Son of God——

JOANNA

If that be so, let us seek him out immediately. Blessed are we above all women—we who are able to wait on him, to serve him.

MARY

Aye, to minister unto his every want, to run before his every thought with service and ministration of love——

JOANNA

[*Ecstatically.*

If he be whom you say, meseems, Mary, that the angels themselves should have envy of us!

[Exeunt Mary and Joanna.]

[Enter Herod, Pilate, and the Priest of Pan.]

PILATE

That was a feast worthy of Rome itself.

HEROD

[With pride.]

My steward knows his business. I brought him all the way from Alexandria. He cooked so well that I gave him his freedom.

[Turning to the priest of Pan.]

And you say that he is not John the Baptist risen from the dead, but a new prophet? Well, that brings a little comfort. I know not why I feared so foolishly. Such a thing is indeed beyond nature, as you say. And yet I feared it, of a truth.

PRIEST OF PAN

They call him Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth.

I have recently held much discourse with a

disciple of his—a pleasant and lively fellow who calls himself Thomas—one who had made a great philosopher if he had only studied at Athens.

PILATE

But tell me of this Jesus? What manner of man is he?

PRIEST OF PAN

A good man, and one who has by some means or other gathered marvellous wisdom beyond and outside the schools; like our Æsculapius, he is a miraculous healer; like our priestess at Dodona, he also possesses the gift of prophecy.

PILATE

And yet there is something more unusual than all that about this man. I remember him now. He was at Jerusalem during the last feast of the Jews, and angered the Pharisees greatly by getting the better of them in all

his disputations with them. The most acute and learned of them were no match for him. And at that time they called him the Messiah—whatever that may mean—I troubled not myself over it, being busied with weightier affairs.

HEROD

[*To Pilate.*

By Messiah they mean King of the Jews; they mean the Christ, of whom I told you.

PILATE

You mean, then, that this prophet Jesus would incite the Jews to rise against the rule of Rome?

HEROD

The same, Procurator!

PILATE

[*Laughing, but slightly annoyed.*

The fool, the poor dreamer of dreams! Let us dismiss such an absurd thing from our

thoughts. We came, what is more to the point, to visit the temple of Pan and to offer sacrifice again ere my departure.

HEROD

[Persistently.

But this man Christ, Procurator, in thus dismissing him lightly, you once more—pardon me—show how little you know of the Jew.

PILATE

[With disgust.

Pah! I am tired of the Jew! I would rather have a little command in the midst of the Libyan Desert than here!

HEROD

[Unable to dismiss the subject.

If this man claim indeed to be the Messiah, he will make you much trouble, Procurator!

PILATE

We have thousands of well-drilled Roman veterans at our disposal.

HEROD

And he might have thousands of madmen at
HIS! Men whose fury would be a power
too great for even Roman discipline.

PRIEST OF PAN

I have heard it rumored that he goes down to
Jerusalem at the next Passover.

PILATE

[Jesting.]

I will make his acquaintance then, perhaps!

PRIEST OF PAN

The time of the Passover is at hand.

HEROD

Indeed, I am now grown curious to see this
remarkable man and to converse with him.

PILATE

He has already usurped too much of our
thought. Come, let us offer up sacrifice and
prayer for my safe return to Jerusalem.

HEROD

[*Obsequiously.*

And let us also pour out another libation to
Cæsar!

[*Exeunt, into the temple, Herod, Pilate, and the priest of Pan, with retinue.*

[*Enter, in great hurry and agitation, Judas and Simon the Zealot.*

JUDAS

Here is the place of meeting.

[*Enter, behind them, Thomas.*

THOMAS

And where is the Master?

SIMON

He has not come yet.

THOMAS

And now again we depart for the Holy City—
so I suppose. Ah, how I weary of these
fruitless journeyings to and fro!

JUDAS

This visit to Jerusalem shall bear such fruit as to astonish all the generations of men forever!

THOMAS

So? Your plan, Judas—tell me your plan! Yet bear well in mind that you must do no injury to him whom we love as our own lives!

JUDAS

You will know my plan when it has been accomplished, and not until then.

[Enter, Matthew, Lebbaeus, Bartholomew, Philip, Andrew, and all the other apostles and disciples, excepting James, John, and Peter.]

MATTHEW

Has anyone brought word from the Master?

THOMAS

Peter, James, and John have gone to him and abide with him, apart, on the mountain.

JUDAS

We expect their arrival soon.

MATTHEW

I wonder what then will be his will? I chafe at this inaction. We have already delayed too long.

JUDAS

I can tell you the Master's will. It is that we once more set out for Jerusalem.

SIMON

This time to triumph or perish.

[Enter James, saddened and downcast.]

MATTHEW

Brother, what word from the Master?

JAMES

Sad, indeed, is the word I bear, and hard to be believed: he prophesies his death; he says that one of us who love him shall betray him. He is exceedingly sorrowful.

JUDAS

[Half to himself; startled.]

That one of us who love him shall betray him
—one of us betray him!

JAMES

Aye!—that he shall be betrayed and put to
death.

THOMAS

Ah, no, no! It must not be! It cannot be!
In such case it were better that we did not
go to the Passover!

JAMES

And he prophesied still more—he said that he
would rise from the dead!

A DISCIPLE

I fear this Prophet, who, with his wonderful
words, has persuaded me to follow him!
His words strike terror into my very soul!

For all that he says comes to pass! Yet how could this be true! No man has ever risen from the dead!

JUDAS

[*To Simon.*

My heart faints, even though I have encased it in the iron of resolve. . . . But nay, he is the Messiah! . . . Yet we shall soon see . . . we shall see . . . in the Garden!

JAMES

[*Continuing.*

When Peter dared rebuke him for so prophesying his own death, the Master smote him with words which pierced the very soul: Get behind me, Evil One, he cried, for you savor of the things that be of men, and not of God!

MATTHEW

But the Kingdom, the Kingdom! What did he prophesy concerning the Kingdom? Will it never come? Is it always to be a dream?

JAMES

After his death it will come, so he proclaims.

But it will not be like any of the kingdoms of earth. It will be a strange empire, where the Meek and the Righteous shall rule . . . Where the Servant shall exceed the Master, and the Poor, the Rich . . . Where the First will be last and the Last will be first . . . But it is dark, dark . . . and seeing I do not see—I do not understand—and my soul is sick unto death!

ANOTHER DISCIPLE

Ah! Woe is me, that I have left my home and kindred for this! For a kingdom whose king shall perish, yet live again, whose princes are to be slaves, whose laws take root in a darkness of contradiction beyond all understanding. Ah, woe is me!

JUDAS

[To him who has just spoken.]

Hush, craven of soul! You have come thus

far! Then endure to the uttermost whatever befall!

THOMAS

That was well said, Judas! I see a light beginning to grow out of the darkness.

JUDAS

Aye, a light that shall grow till it lights the world!

[Enter John, exultingly. They all look toward him.]

MATTHEW

John! We look to you for a word of light!
For to you the Master reveals his innermost soul!

BARTHOLOMEW

We are like sheep which have no shepherd.

JOHN

But you shall have a shepherd, and he shall soon come to lead you safely into the folds of the kingdom . . . for Christ now marches to victory . . . I have seen his Glory! . . . The Glory of God has descended upon him and transfigured him to the likeness of the sun!

[Enter, hastily, Peter. They now all turn, as with one accord, to Peter.]

JOHN

Why did not the Christ come with you?

PETER

I left him alone upon the mountain-top, at his command. But he will soon come to us. He is more than a man . . . He is the Son of God. Peter, whom say men that I am? he asked of me, just ere I left him. Some say Elias, I answered, some say John the Baptist, and others, one of the Prophets.

But whom say you that I am?

Then a vision rushed over me like a great wind, and I fell on my face, crying, Thou? . . . Thou art the Christ, the Son of God . . . And then, in acknowledgment of the truth of what I had said, a glory fell over his form, from Heaven, such that mine eyes could not endure the brightness of it.

A DISCIPLE

And did he himself call himself the Son of God?

PETER

With his own lips!

SEVERAL DISCIPLES

[Crying out, one after the other.]

'Tis blasphemy! . . . He blasphemes God!
. . . He has gone mad!

A DISCIPLE

Aye! . . . 'Tis blasphemy. . . . The Prophet of Nazareth has gone mad! . . . Because

of these bold words of his I will follow him no more!

[*Going.*]

ANOTHER DISCIPLE

And I, too, leave him. . . . I fear that God will visit His just wrath upon even all who continue to follow him, after this!

ANOTHER

I, too, can no longer tarry. . . . And you who abide with him still, let me warn you that you are by that very act foredoomed to destruction! I flee while there is yet time for escape.

[*These disciples go out.*]

THOMAS

[*After a long silence.*]

Yes, 'tis a hard saying! . . . But I, having known him, having loved him, will bide with him until the end, whatever it be!

SIMON

Alas! Alas!

[To John.

Go to him—for he loves you the most . . . Go to him and bring him hither . . . Let us learn from his own lips the meaning of these sayings and prophecies! . . . He dies . . . He is the Son of God . . . Having died, he lives again, and, triumphing, brings in the Kingdom!

[Clutching at Judas' robe—aside.

Judas! Judas!

JUDAS

[Aside to Simon.

'Tis the Flesh that his godhead moves in—'tis this that weakens his resolve—'tis this that makes him speak in parables! He is losing faith in himself. But trust to me! I shall not fail!

PETER

He goes down to Jerusalem! This time to conquer. Doubt it not.

[Noticing the various expressions on the disciples' faces, pauses; then, with great emphasis:

What, doubt you the Son of God? He goes down to Jerusalem——

JAMES

[Breaking in.

Alas, to die! To die!

[Several of the disciples weep.

THOMAS

[Boldly.

Then let us also go down and die with him!

[The doors of the temple of Pan swing open, and Herod, Pilate, the priest of Pan, and retinue, appear. Both parties—the apostles and the pagans—look at each other in silence. Tableau.

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE I

A room in the palace of the High-Priest at Jerusalem. Window in background. Doorways to left and right.

Hanan and Caiaphas discovered at rise of curtain.

CAIAPHAS

Think you that this trouble-maker will come down to the feast? If he come, we must surely lay hold on him.

HANAN

Aye, for his power among the people has already become too great.

CAIAPHAS

They say he works miracles as did the prophets of old.

HANAN

If he does so, it is not of God, but of the Evil One—for he abides not by a single law of the Fathers.

CAIAPHAS

And not only does he break the Laws of the Fathers, but he also blasphemes against God and the Temple. Of God, I am told that he has said: I am His son, and He is my Father, and he has boasted that he can in three days both destroy and rebuild the Temple.

HANAN

[Gleefully and malevolently.]

Why, if that be so, then it will be easy to compass his destruction. We can have him stoned to death for blasphemy.

CAIAPHAS

Nay—not without permission of Pilate. But I have heard that he proclaims himself to be

the Messiah, the King of the Jews. This will grate on the Roman ear . . . They will crucify him for that . . . or hand him over to us, that *we* might crucify him . . . Ah, would that he were now here, that——

[A commotion heard without. Caiaphas steps back to the window, and looks out. He gazes fixedly; then suddenly draws back.]

Ah!

HANAN

What see you?

CAIAPHAS

It is he!

HANAN

Who?

CAIAPHAS

Him of whom we spake—Jesus of Nazareth.

Hear the people, what they cry!

[Cries of Hail, son of David! Hail, Messiah! Hosannah in the Highest!]

CAIAPHAS

Do you not hear in what wise they acclaim him!

[Looking out at window again.]

They are casting branches of palm under his feet! They receive him as if he were already their king.

[Voices: Hail, son of David! Hail, King of Israel!]

HANAN

[In wrath and fear.]

Let us seize upon him now, while he is close by, lest he escape again, as he did at the last Festival. Call the guard!

[Makes to call the guard.]

CAIAPHAS

[Restraining him.]

Nay! not now! Not with the multitude pressing about him. To-day they would fight for him.

HANAN

But to-morrow!

CAIAPHAS

The mob is fickle—to-morrow they will have forgotten him. Then we can take him without shedding of blood, accuse him before Pilate, and have him put to death.

HANAN

But, perhaps there may come no opportune to-morrow. You know not the man. At times he is capable of bold and resolute action, as when, for instance, he whipped the money-changers out of the Temple. He might even attempt to make seizure on the city!

CAIAPHAS

In that case, it were well, indeed. For the Roman legions would soon make an end of him and his followers, and we would be

spared what will at best, perhaps, be an undertaking fraught with peril.

[Enter a priest.]

PRIEST

[Bowling low.]

Masters, the man whom ye have long sought to lay hands on has even now entered the city gate.

CAIAPHAS

And how find you the people disposed?

PRIEST

In a dangerous mood. They believe him to be the Messiah. For a wonderful report concerning him has spread abroad, making all the pilgrims believe in him.

CAIAPHAS

What now?

PRIEST

'Tis said that in the nearby village of Bethany he has raised a man, one Lazarus, from the

dead—and *that* after he had lain three days in the tomb!

HANAN

Believe they this?

PRIEST

They believe, and have gone mad over it.

HANAN

It cannot be denied, now, that he is a dangerous man, this Jesus. Long ere this he should have been seized upon and put to death.

CAIAPHAS

I have hitherto held him too lightly, I must confess. Last Passover I carelessly let him slip through my hands. But now I shall mend my negligence by giving him over to death, and that quickly. He shall never again escape his just punishment.

[A knock heard at the door.]

CAIAPHAS

*[Clapping hands for servant.]**[Enter servant.]*

Go see who it is knocks at yon door. I had thought that a guard was stationed thereat. Ask him what he will who thus intrudes so rudely on the High-Priest's presence.

[Servant disappears and re-appears.]

CAIAPHAS

[To servant.]

What manner of man is he?

SERVANT

It is one who calls himself Judas; one who claims to have been a disciple of this Jesus.

CAIAPHAS

Bid him enter. I knew him well in former days. He was once a rich merchant here at Jerusalem: but he disposed of all his wealth to follow this impostor.

[Exit servant.]

HANAN

[Rubbing his hands together.]

Ah! . . . things go well . . . already we
have one of them in our hands!

[Enter Judas and servant.]

JUDAS

[Bowing low.]

The blessing of Jehovah wait upon you.

[To Caiaphas.]

Are you not Caiaphas, the High-Priest?

CAIAPHAS

You have said.

JUDAS

Then I have a matter of gravest import to
consider with you . . .

[Significantly.]

Alone!

*[Caiaphas beckons to servant and priest
to withdraw.]*

*[Judas waits, in silence. He glances at
Hanan.]*

CAIAPHAS

This is Hanan, my father-in-law!

JUDAS

Did I not say *alone*?

CAIAPHAS

Open your robe. You carry no dagger about you, after the manner of the Zealots?

JUDAS

[Opening the folds of his robe.]

I have come unarmed.

CAIAPHAS

Father, leave us, then, for a space.

[Lower.]

Remain behind yonder curtain; have others within call!

[Hanan goes out by curtain.]

CAIAPHAS

And now, what would you?

JUDAS

[Smitten with sudden misgiving: he hesitates, trembles, sways, and then makes toward exit.]

Nay, it was naught, believe me! 'Twas naught but a momentary madness that brought me here. A great fear has fallen upon me. I must go and leave unsaid what I came to say.

CAIAPHAS

[Puzzled.]

Yet, speak! . . . do you fear to speak? . . .
Do you fear me?

JUDAS

[Recovering himself, with determination to proceed, come what may.]

I fear not to speak. I fear not you. I know not what I fear, and yet am I stricken with terror.

CAIAPHAS

[Aside.

The man is mad. He shakes with madness.

'Tis well there are others nigh.

[Calling out.

Judas!

JUDAS

[As one startled out of a nightmare.

Ah . . . what would you with me, Master? . . . It must be done . . . have mercy!

CAIAPHAS

I, Caiaphas, the High-Priest, call you—you do well to call me Master. I command you to speak. What came you here for? You stagger about like one full of wine. But you are in my power. Speak, or I shall have you seized and bound and cast into prison.

JUDAS

[To himself, distractedly.

Nay, do I not do him a great wrong?—him who has trusted me with the common purse, with many things!

CAIAPHAS

[Falling into his humor.]

Who was it trusted you with the common purse?

Who is against whom you conspire—
whom would you betray? Speak—you have
come here of your own will. You cannot
now depart until you have delivered yourself
of that for which you came!

[Judas advances toward the door.]

CAIAPHAS

What ho! The Guard! The Guard!

*[The guard appear: they present spears
to Judas' breast. He bares it, in dis-
dain.]*

JUDAS

[Angrily.]

Press home, if you will! I no longer fear any-
thing mortal. Caiaphas, this is not the way
to make me speak.

[Distractedly.]

It is God I fear, not man. But I have taken the step. . . . It was so ordained from the beginning, and I shall persevere.

[Sinking his face in his hands.]

Ah, God, wilt thou not find a voice out of the silence and tell me what to do?

CAIAPHAS

[Beckons spearmen out.]

Strange being! . . . I wait upon your words.

JUDAS

Nor shall you wait in vain. Know, then, that I, Judas, am come to betray into your hands the Saviour of Israel, the Son of God.

CAIAPHAS

[Eagerly.]

Ah! . . .

[Restraining his eagerness and sneering.]

You mean the mad prophet of Nazareth!

JUDAS

[Shaken with a new terror.

Nay, I mean the Saviour of the World, the Son of God!

CAIAPHAS

Man, are you mad? Can the Wind have a son?

JUDAS

Ah, you blaspheme God! All things are possible with Him!

CAIAPHAS

And you betray His son?

JUDAS

Yes!

[With determination.

That he might manifest himself over the weakness of the flesh—that he might tarry no longer, but blaze forth in all the splendor and terror of his God-head. In betraying him I do not betray him. Neither do I be-

tray you—for now you know beforehand that in taking him you will pit yourself against God—though you will not believe this, and will not thereby be restrained from laying hands on him.

CAIAPHAS

[With a sharp, half-frightened laugh.]

You rave! Where is this God of yours?

When will you bring him into my hands?

[Flinging a purse at Judas' feet.]

There is an earnest of our bargain!

JUDAS

[Shuddering.]

Of our bargain! What bargain?

CAIAPHAS

[Impatiently.]

Have you not bargained with me to betray Jesus of Nazareth into my hands?

JUDAS

[Dazed.

Have I? Ah, yes . . .

[With a wild laugh.

Ah, yes! . . . I have . . . but not for gold!

CAIAPHAS

[Mockingly.

For what else, then, if not for gold?

JUDAS

That he might prove himself the Son of God
to an unbelieving world!

CAIAPHAS

But take up the purse!

JUDAS

*[Not heeding, going closer to Caiaphas,
his eyes starting from his head.*To-night! He prays . . . in the Garden of
Gethsemane . . . I will lead you to him . . .
after sunset!

CAIAPHAS

Take up the purse, then, as a surety!

JUDAS

[Shrinking; to himself.]

I! . . . for gold? . . . Nay, but for the Kingdom's sake! But they will suspect if I do not . . . some traps . . . some ambush . . . and all will run amiss!

[Stoops slowly and picks up the purse. As he rises to his full height, with the purse in his hand, the curtain to left is flung aside, showing Hanan and two priests.]

CAIAPHAS

[Pointing to them.]

Judas! You are bound—behold the witnesses!

JUDAS

I am betrayed!

[Shrieks.]

Ah!

CAIAPHAS

You came to betray—what more?

JUDAS

[A great revulsion sweeping over him.]

No! No!

[Flings down purse violently at Caiaphas' feet.]

There, take it back again! It is fire. It burns the touch. It is full of scorpions.

[Cries out and falls.]

CAIAPHAS

[To guards.]

Bear him out; keep close guard over him. He is not to be trusted.

[They pick Judas up and start out with him.]

[Stooping and picking up the purse.]

Wait, he must not go without the price of betrayal!

[Puts the purse under Judas' robe.]

[The guards march off with him.]

CAIAPHAS

[*Turns to Hanan, with great relief.*

It is finished . . . at last we have Jesus of Nazareth in our power!

SCENE II

The Betrayal

The audience is in complete darkness. There is a tenuous white curtain, hung between the stage and the audience, and all the action of this scene takes place behind the curtain. The rustle of passing garments; a torch casts momentary shadows of several human figures; and then darkness again. Suddenly a low, rich voice is heard.

THE VOICE

Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder.

[*A long pause; a heavy sigh.*

My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Tarry ye here and watch with me.

[*A long pause; a sound of moving.*

THE VOICE

[Praying.

O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!—nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.

[A pause: a long sigh: heavy breathing, as of one sleeping.

What, Peter, could ye not watch with me an hour?

[Another pause.

THE VOICE

[In great agony.

O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done!

[A very long pause, during which sobbing is heard.

THE VOICE

[Now with great calmness.

O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.

[A pause.

THE VOICE

[With solemn joy.

Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. . . . Behold, he is at hand that doth come to betray me!

ANOTHER VOICE

Whomsoever I shall kiss—that is he!

[Sound of an approaching multitude. The whole curtain is lit up from behind with torches. The shadow of one standing alone lurches against the curtain. Another shadow advances to it. They kiss.

THE OTHER VOICE

Hail, Master!

[A great sigh of anguish.

THE VOICE

Friend, wherefore art thou come?

[Other shadows approach.

THE VOICE

[Again.

Ah, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man
with a kiss? .

*[A great commotion of shadows and
moving of torches.*

VOICE OF PETER

We are betrayed! The Master is betrayed!
At least let us die like men!

[Noise of scuffle.

THE VOICE

Put up again thy sword! For they that take
the sword shall perish by the sword. Think-
est thou that I cannot now pray to my Father,
and He shall presently give me more than
twelve legions of angels!

SECOND VOICE

In His holy name, pray to Him, I beseech thee!

THE VOICE

Nay, not so, for in such wise cometh not my Kingdom. . . . Do with me as ye will!

SECOND VOICE

[Wailing.

Alas, alas, the Kingdom hath passed by! . . .

I have failed . . . woe is me, I have failed!

[The leaping lights and lurching shadows pass out across the curtain in silence. Weeping is heard in the darkness. Then the curtain goes up, and the Garden of Gethsemane stands dimly revealed in feeble moonlight. Judas crouches like a rock-cast shadow in the centre of the stage, convulsed with anguish.

JUDAS

'Tis done! 'Tis done—and, woe is me, he bared not the omnipotence of his arm! Those whom I led to take him were not scattered with lightning as leaves are scattered

by wind! Alas! Alas! for all time I shall be a hissing to mankind because of this, my failure.

A VOICE

[Whispering.]

Judas, what hast thou done?

JUDAS

I have betrayed, if not the Son of God, the noblest man that ever woman bore! But get thee hence, I know thee who thou art, the Evil One!

[A fiendish laugh echoes and dies away.]

JUDAS

[Dropping purse to the ground.]

Nay, I shall take it up again—

[Takes it up.]

—shall go and cast it, a ringing handful of silver, into the High-Priest's face! . . . 'Twas but a pretext, a pitiable pretext . . . otherwise they had suspected me

of leading them into danger . . . For at any one time, I, that was purse-bearer to the apostles, might have stolen from the common purse far more than this . . . and I gave up my riches to follow him . . . I will go and throw it into the High-Priest's face.

*[A hollow laugh again echoes volumi-
nously.]*

JUDAS

Come forth and shew thyself, or else be silent!

[Enter a hooded shape.]

JUDAS

[Wildly.]

I am distraught. How many are there of you?

Either thou art two, or thou hast two voices!

SHAPE

I am legion; wouldst see more?

JUDAS

Thou art enough, legion! Vile shadow, what
wouldst with me?

SHAPE

I am a spirit of evil, sent to thank thee by him who is the Prince of Evil Ones, to thank thee for betraying into the hands of men the Son of God!

JUDAS

What Son of God?

SHAPE

Jesus of Nazareth—thou knowest who!

JUDAS

He was not the Son of God, I deem. Nevertheless, thou liest—I betrayed him not—I loved him. It was my too great faith, my too great love, that in excess of blindness led me astray. But, if he be the Son of God, 'tis not yet too late. Even yet he shall proclaim himself.

SHAPE

They will condemn him to death!

JUDAS

They cannot slay him, if he be divine.

SHAPE

They will crown him with thorns.

JUDAS

The crown will break forth into roses as soon
as it touches his head.

SHAPE

They will nail him to a cross.

JUDAS

If he be the Son of God, he will astonish the world and all the waiting angels, by stepping down from the cross, as a king steps down from a throne. And the cross will become a throne, and from it he shall rule all the nations.

*[A multitudinous laughter surges in
from behind the scenes.]*

JUDAS

[*Cowering.*]

What was that? . . . Are there more?

SHAPE

That was the legion of which I erstwhile spake.

They cannot be numbered for multitude.

They come to sit about thee as their king—
all the devils of betrayals that ever were or
shall be—and thou the chief Devil!

[Very dark. Enter, dim-seen shape after shape, till the stage is filled.]

JUDAS

Ah!—send them away—for captain of them
thou seemest.

THE SHAPE

Be not unkind with them—they come to do thee
homage. For know, Judas, that thou hast
done a thing which is already famous in hell.
'Tis not often that one can betray a son of
God! And henceforth thy name—in heaven

an abomination, on earth an execration, and in hell a white word of joy forever—shall be a type and not a name—a symbol of shameless betrayal, of uttermost foulness of soul. Hell glories in thee, Judas!

JUDAS

Nay, I strove for the greatest good for which mortal hath ever striven!

THE SHAPE

And hence thou hast overshot thyself and hast achieved the greatest evil.

JUDAS

[*Wearily.*

Leave me, and take with thee thy brother spirits.

THE SHAPE

Nay, I am thine—thine own accusing conscience.

JUDAS

And a foul companion thou art!

SHAPE

Not half as foul as the soul I haunt.

[More fiendish laughter.]

JUDAS

Ah, I would be alone! Great God, have mercy
upon me!

THE SHAPE

'Tis impossible that thou shouldst be alone—
no man who does evil goes alone. All hell
is emptied of itself to do thee honor.

[Enter more shapes.]

JUDAS

There is no longer any room for them.

SHAPE

All hell could house its demons in thy heart.

JUDAS

With day thou and these monsters must depart.

SHAPE

Not from thy bosom—'tis our proper home!

JUDAS

Woe is me, I am doomed!

THE SHAPE

Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God.

SCENE III

A day later. The same scene.

Judas discovered crouching, as before. Enter, sorrowfully, Simon the Zealot.

SIMON

[Not seeing Judas.]

Alas! Alas! The dream of the Kingdom has vanished like a morning mist, and all our goodly company is dispersed like a flock of sheep before the wolf when the shepherd is away.

JUDAS

[Hisses.

Simon!

SIMON

[Startled.

What dreadful sound was that?

[Discovers Judas, and shrinks.

Ah, Judas, is it you?

JUDAS

'Tis I . . .

[With great hunger of soul.

The Master, Simon, tell me of him!

SIMON

[Harshly.

Judas, fear for your soul. He is doomed—
condemned to hang betwixt earth and sky.
They spat upon him. They crushed upon
his head a crown of thorns. They thrust a
reed in mockery for a sceptre betwixt his
hands. Judas, you have destroyed the Hope
of all Israel!

JUDAS

You are bold, indeed, to blame me alone, when
you approved of my plan, and Thomas
winked at it.

SIMON

I did not dream it would ever end thus!

JUDAS

Out, craven! You condoned the enterprise,
and yet would bear no portion of the blame.

SIMON

I did not dream that this would be the end!

[Weeps.]

JUDAS

It seems that you, too, are torn asunder with
remorse. Tell me, do the spirits trouble you,
also?

SIMON

You never told me that you meant to betray
him in this manner.

[Shuddering.]

I did not think that you would hunt him down
as men hunt a wild animal!

JUDAS

Hush! I deemed him omnipotent—though
made weak of purpose by the flesh in which
his Godhead moved. I thought to do him
a kindly service.

[Wildly.]

Before Jehovah, I swear that my kiss was one
of love and belief, and not one of hate and
betrayal! So, upbraid me not. My guilt
is heavy enough. God punishes me. Up-
braid me not.

SIMON

[Touched.]

He raves! The shadow of death lies black
upon him.

[Enter Peter, in great distress.]

PETER

Ah, they have compelled him to carry his own
cross. Thrice he fell on the way. They

have nailed him, hand and foot, the Living Lord, on the cross. . . . The soldiers cast lots for his garment. . . . My heart breaks. Ah, God, wilt Thou not come down and rescue Thy son? Wilt Thou not bid him step down from the cross and bring in the Kingdom for which we have so fruitlessly travailed, and hoped, and striven?

JUDAS

[Piteously.]

Peter! Peter! Have faith. He yet shall step down from the cross. Is it not true?

PETER

[Shrinking back from Judas.]

Loathèd creature! You have worked this ill!
You have done this!

JUDAS

[With agony.]

Aye! 'twas my work. I pay for it! I pay for it! But chide not, lest the Son of Man step down from the cross and yet fulfil my faith

in him. Then 'twill be I who shall rise in glory beyond all the twelve!

[A long silence.]

[One by one the other disciples, like strayed sheep, gather on the stage. Then the darkness at mid-day descends. All creation seems to rock and tremble. It lightens. The roar of the cataclysm dies off. Quiet ensues.]

CHORUS OF ANGELS

[Singing in the darkness.]

All Nature groans because its Lord is dead;
Yet Death from this sad hour is vanquishèd,
And, though man's body wither like the rose,
His soul at last her mighty nature knows.
'Tis finished—by the death of God's own Son,
Man over Death the Victory hath won!

[Light gradually re-appears. Judas is seen to have vanished.]

SIMON

Ah, Peter, did you see the flash of wings, and hear those voices singing wondrous things?

PETER

I heard, but understood not.

SIMON

Nor did I. But full well I know that something marvellous, something that the world never saw before, has taken place.

PETER

But whither has Judas fled?

SIMON

I think that he has wandered forth to die. He has gone mad!

[Enter, solemnly, John. All eyes converge toward him, as bearing the last word.]

JOHN

He is dead!

[Groaning and sobbing.]

PETER

And it was one of us whom he trusted and
loved that betrayed him!

THOMAS

O basest evil ever wrought by man!

JOHN

Peace, brethren, peace! Peter, are you not
smitten with shame? Was it not you who
denied him thrice?

PETER

I did not give him over into the hands of
death!

THOMAS

Aye, that he did not!

JOHN

Thomas, 'twas you at every turn met Jesus
face to face with doubt!

PETER

However, I pronounce my curse upon Judas, the betrayer. For to me is given from on high equal power to bless or ban. Accursed may you be forever, Judas! May all bread turn to ashes at your lips, and all drink to fire! May all the world hate you! May God never look with love on you again through all eternity!

JOHN

Cease, Peter, cease! No more of this, I pray. Be not too stern of heart. Before mine eyes a hope begins to dawn, even for Judas, misguided in a rash resolve. Yet did we so much better than he? How often have we grieved, in little things, the Master's heart! How often have we doubted and withheld our souls from him!

PETER

[Remembering, weeps.]

Aye, 'tis so!

JOHN

[With power.]

Now, who here dares pronounce further curses on the head of Judas, arch-traitor though he be? Who of us did not forsake the Master at his moment of supreme agony? What did ye here while he died yonder? And even now he hangs alone, between two thieves, on the dreadful hill of skulls. . . . At the first bitter blast of persecution we were dispersed on winds of fear, like withered leaves.

PETER

Nevermore will I deny him. Let them come and take me now, and put me to death, if they will!

JAMES

I will die for him, dead, whom I misunderstood when alive!

THOMAS

I will believe in him, in spite of doubt.

[Enter Mary Magdalen.]

PETER

Mary, what would you here, at this dark hour?

JOHN

Rebuke her not—the Master loved her much.

MARY

Brethren in the Lord, rejoice! He is not dead,
for he shall rise from the Dead.

THOMAS

Alas! we know too well that he is dead.

MARY

Nay, he shall rise again; he is not dead!

SCENE IV

The Pentecostal Visitation

Interior of a chamber at Jerusalem. The apostles grouped around a table as in the Last Supper.

MATTHEW

For whom is this vacant place at the head of the table?

ANDREW

'Tis kept in honor of him who will break bread with us no more.

PETER

Would that I might but look into his dear face again!

THOMAS

Alas for mortality and the power of the grave over men! He has not risen! The grave has proved stronger even than he!

ANDREW

Yet has Mary Magdalen avowed that she
found empty the sepulchre in which we laid
him. She avers that she has seen him and
spoken with him.

MATTHEW

Alas for the Kingdom! Still bow the Jews be-
neath the yoke of Rome!

*[The candles go out as at a sudden
wind.]*

THOMAS

Some one has flung open the door. The wind
has blown out the candles!

ANDREW

Nay, I sit next the door! 'Tis closed!

JOHN

He has risen. He is even now among us.

THOMAS

Some one sits in the chair. I feel a presence
by my side!

PETER

Brethren, 'tis the Comforter of which he spake.
[A misty light fills the room.]

JOHN

[Smitten with the Spirit.]

Ah, 'tis he! 'tis he! He is with us. He has not
forsaken us. Verily, he has risen from the
Dead into a larger life than ever! Dear
Lord, Beloved Shepherd of Souls, is it thou?

THOMAS

I believe! I believe! It is past speech! Thy
Kingdom comes as I dreamed, but dared not
believe!

JOHN

He lives, he lives—the very Son of God!
Behold the Kingdom that he promised us,

'Tis no vain dream, 'tis everlasting truth!
He shall bind all the nations into one,
The love of him shall flood the world!
He shall conquer with love and gentleness, and
not with the sword.
He shall live again in every heart that loves its
fellow-men.
Peace he will plant where discord grew before.
He will save and heal the souls of men forever
and ever.
Ah, dear Master, forgive us, we beseech Thee,
For deeming that Thou hadst ever died!

CURTAIN





